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PCZONE

ISSUE 172 OCTOBER 2006

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

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Steve Purcell on the
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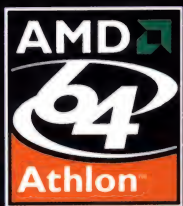
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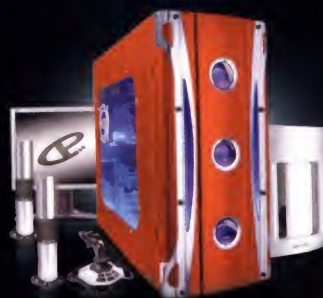
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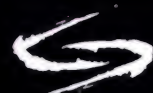
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COVER STORY

50

CRYSIS

Get suited up for our exclusive feature on Crytek's plans for multiplayer domination

NEVERQUEST 119

"As I leave, another man tweaks her nipple. I pretend not to notice"



**BROKEN SWORD:
THE ANGEL OF DEATH 58**
NUNS SHALL PASS - SIR GEORGE BECOMES A
MAN IN HIS LATEST GLOBAL ADVENTURE

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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38 SAM & MAX

Too busy? PC ZONE in 53 words...
Steve sees a man eat some salad and witters on about *Crysis*. The hands of turn-based strategy and adventure games appear through the soil and grab our ankles. Not to mention buckets of free muck, kilometres of hardware and hectares of love for you, the reader who probably reads this bit every month.



ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND

WELCOME TO A hot and sweaty PC ZONE. In addition to the gobsmacking next-gen visual feasts of *Crysis*, *Battlefield 2142* and *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*, we have two games this month that could generate a warm Ready Brek-style glow of nostalgia if you loved the golden era of the PC point-and-click adventure.

If you're too young to remember the early 1990s, that was when you used a mouse to 'point' at objects on screen, then 'click' to interact with objects and characters (I hope you're following this...) It was the cutting-edge of adventure gaming and both LucasArts and Revolution created memorable titles such as *The Secret Of Monkey Island* and *Broken Sword: Shadow Of The Templars*.

Games moved on, and as graphics improved and gameplay left behind simply combining glue with a mechanical manatee, the point-and-click adventure was officially pronounced dead - by *Broken Sword's* creator Charles Cecil, no less. However, this issue we proudly bring you two games now flying the flag again for old-school adventure gaming - *Sam & Max* and *Broken Sword: The Angel Of Death*.

While neither title will exactly stretch your graphics card, the off-the-wall dialogue, mind-twisting puzzles, atmospheric environments and sedate pacing remind us of a time when character and scripts were as important as pixel-count. And personally, I reckon that's a damn good thing...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor

"CALL OF JUAREZ WILL SCALP THE REST"

- PC Gamer

"CALL OF JUAREZ IS A STUNNING GAME"

- The Gaming Shack Network

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UPFRONT

**The sound of
Scarface**


AMAZING PREY COMPO!

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WIN!
COLLECTOR'S
EDITIONS
OF PREY!

FREEPLAY/FREWARE

Freeware

Steve Megarity rises the freeware bar in Previews, USA

PENUMBRA

Good-looking Freeware game shocker!

GAME OF THE MONTH

FREEPLAY/HARDWARE

Cortex Command

The worms have turned

WARGAME OF THE MONTH

FLOW

Also with it

FREE GAMES!

108

FREEPLAY

There's no such thing as a free lunch, they say. Well, this isn't lunch. Stop eating it. It isn't even food, you moron...

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JON 'LOG' BLYTH

Staff Writer

AGE: 32

LIKES: Food

DISLIKES: Physical exertion

FANCIES: Beggars, not choosers

FAVOURITE GAME:

Final Fantasy VII, Dungeon Master

PLAYING NOW: *Fallout 2*

This month, Log is celebrating the critical acclaim for the TV show of his book, which prompted such comments on the Internet as 'Pot Noodle TV at its worst, horrid, horrid, horrid', and 'the participants of this moronic show should be ashamed of themselves'. Log responded to such criticism by climbing to the top of the BT tower and hiding from the cruel world, until he was coaxed down with the kindest comments people could muster, which included Will, looking from side to side and stammering: "It wasn't shit". Log has since become a hilltop recluse.



SUZY WALLACE

Reviews Editor

Sweet, delicate Suzy is like a dainty pink flower; her natural air of passive obedience is surpassed only by the fact that when she reads this, she's going to kneel on my chest and punch my throat.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Prey



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Freelance Character

Richie has recently come out of an *Eve Online*-induced hibernation, like a Clanger coming out of his space cavern and wiping his button eyes. He's since been forced to accept that life simply isn't that pretty.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Sword Of The Stars

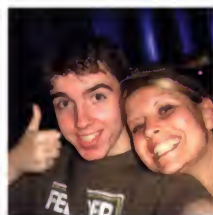


JAMIE SEFTON

Editor

Sefton spends a substantial fraction of his life in Leeds. Is it the allure of the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition? The transport infrastructure? Actually, it's severe mental illness.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
SiN: Episodes, Prey

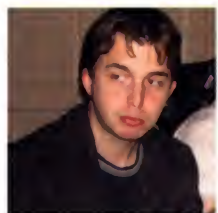


STEVE HOGARTY

Staff Writer

Steve now ranks alongside Guinness and Daniel O'Donnell as one of Ireland's greatest exports. Sensing a potential cash-in, we tried to float him on the stock exchange. But he sank. Funny.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Free stuff



WILL PORTER

Deputy Editor

Will Porter can't think of anything he's done this month that could be printed in the magazine. You'll just have to wait for his uncensored DVD, *Too Hot For Meet The Team*, available via mail order.

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Broken Sword, Civ IV: Warlords



PHIL WAND

More Machine Than Man Now

Wandy's love of hardware has roots in a romance with a 9-pin dot matrix printer. He still resents the divorce settlement - she got the RS232 and all the ribbons. Still, who's obsolete now, eh?

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING:
Desert Combat, TFC

STUFF THAT HASN'T HELPED US THIS MONTH... Will accidentally deleting all the images off the server. "Has everyone got copies of everything they've ever done?"

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US SLIGHTLY THIS MONTH... Will realising, 15 minutes later, that he was wrong. "It's still there, in a new folder!"

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

CELEBRITY
SPECIAL

BRIAN DOWLING OFF BIG BROTHER 75 Mins Clare was within 50ft of him once

A COUNTRYFILE PRESENTER 5 Mins Once got changed in Will's mum's loo

EDDIE LARGE 3 Mins Was once heckled by a nine-year-old Log

LES DENNIS 1223 Mins Sat near art editor Dale while he was having a pizza

THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND 42 Mins Visited Steve's mum's work once

GEORGE LUCAS 750 Mins OK Steve, so you saw him eating salad...

DEXTER FLETCHER 36 Mins Wrote 'Hello Pretty' on something for a 12-year-old Suzy

JAMIE SEFTON 38 Mins Being on *Emmerdale*. It's on IMDb and everything

QUENTIN TARANTINO 22 Mins Was asked by a man dressed as Elvis what was in the *Pulp Fiction* briefcase, as Andy eavesdropped

IAN WRIGHT 74 Mins Sped away from deputy art editor Kevin on a motorbike

WIN!

When you see the word 'WIN' in big (albeit tiny) letters, your natural instinct will be to say "well, with a tiny WIN this big, I can only wonder what spectacular array of prizes await". There's only one way to find out: send your answer to the question on the front cover to Tiny Compo (172), PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Tiny Compo 170 was won by Chris Leishman, who should have received something nice by now for knowing that Tommy's magic avian spirit guide in *Prey* was called Talon. Well done you.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!

LETTERS

Feel the urge to share something? Tell *Jamie Sefton*...



DEUS EX-CITED

I was over the moon to read your exclusive interview with Warren Spector in issue 171, where in addition to talking about his new development company Junction Point, he said that he'd love to revisit the *Deus Ex* universe again if only he could acquire the rights. Can we start a 'Save the Dentons' fund so that Warren can have enough money to buy the IP from Eidos and make the *Deus Ex* game that we all so desperately want to play?

Nigel Hobbs

Great idea Nigel. The campaign to bring back JC and friends starts here! We've also got a special



surprise for all *Deus Ex* aficionados on the back page this month...

EPI-SOD OFF

I would hate to see the *Half-Life* storyline abused for the sake of just cashing in on an IP that has made Valve a success. Will they ever tie up the loose ends and address the questions that have been plaguing us ever since the original *Half-Life*? What exactly is the point of paying for something that in the end has limited replay value and does not constitute a final product?

Episodic content works for TV because we don't pay anything and can wait a week to continue a plotline. Maybe Valve and Ritual are simply milking the fact that gamers will want to follow their storylines and thus release episodic content, which if counted together would mean that you'd be paying a far higher price for the sum total of all episodes rather than just one complete game. Imagine five years from now and *Half-Life 3* is coming out – oh wait, no it's not – it's broken into 24 episodes, with multiple bonus packs, as with *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. You want to pilot a Strider? \$10 please and you can have it. Want more weapons for Gordon? That'll be \$10. Farhad Agzamov

I don't know about you, but I'd pay for \$10 for a storyline expansion... There are positive and negative points about episodic gaming – on the one hand you get to play the sequels to your favourite

games quicker and at a reduced price (what with the current exchange rate); but on the other hand, yes you pay more overall for the complete number of episodes and there's no-one to monitor the prices online. As for bonus packs, these are additional content to the finished product and are meant for gamers who want to eke out more gameplay from their favourite titles – such as *Oblivion*. We'll have an exclusive interview with Valve about their new games and plans for the future next issue.

DOUBLE THE FUN

Having just got hold of another 17-inch flatscreen monitor to go with my existing one, I thought I would put the two together and enter the world of DDG – Dual Display Gaming and WOW! Suddenly, playing games like *Half-Life 2* now takes on a cinematic effect with an ultra-panoramic display. I can't wait to install *Grand Prix 4* and see what that looks like – this makes PC gaming even more enjoyable. Right, I must go now, gotta send my boss a text that I won't be in tomorrow as I'll be in City 17... Stuart Denton

Glad to hear you're experiencing the joys of multi-screen gaming Stuart. It's definitely something that everyone should try out if they have the time, space and more importantly, money, and is superb for shooters and driving games. If you're interested in having a go at the ultimate screen set-up, Wendy will be presenting a special guide in our Hardware section next month.



WIN!

Letter of the month

Joystick junkie

I saw recently that the first videogame addiction clinic had opened in the UK. What a load of bollocks! How can they say that gaming is as damaging as gambling, alcohol abuse or drugs? They say that gamers showed symptoms of withdrawal if they didn't play games. Where's the problem? If I don't get my 'fix' of *Counter-Strike*, I miss it terribly, but I'm not going to rob someone's house to feed my addiction! This is another attempt by the media to get at videogames, which they seem to blame for everything from copycat killings to terrorism. Leave my hobby alone, you bastards! Angry George

The Far East has had these so-called Internet/Gaming addiction clinics for years and there have been instances of gamers collapsing and dying from playing games for days on end, as well as numerous divorces by frustrated gaming widows. But gaming's like anything – play in moderation and it's fine. If you do find you haven't washed for three days and are shitting into a bucket, it's time to cut down. Have a graphics card.

ONE OF THESE!

You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like 'PC ZONE rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a superb Connect3D X1600 Pro 512MB!

SAY WHAT?

"I like to own a game, not just have some blob of gigabytes floating about in the ether"

Jack Chapman isn't Steam's biggest fan

ODE TO ZONE

You're never alone with *PC ZONE*, The great articles make you laugh, The bad puns make you moan, The monthly reviews give you gaming news.

I love *Civ IV* and *Rome: Total War*, But I'd never have bought them without first checking the score, Now I can't wait for *Medieval 2*, *Alan Wake* and more.

Suzy Wallace, we thank you for your demos, You make all the readers such happy fellows. To the rest of the team who make *ZONE* impos- to beat, I just wanted to send a message to let you know you're really I33t!



Does flattery get you anywhere? I'll have to wait and see, Will it be Letter of the Month for me? Will I get any accolades? Or will you give a graphics card for a complaint about the clothed booth babes? Lindsey Harder

Congratulations Lindsey for a poem well done, But as for the graphics card, you haven't won.

I WANT BOXES!

This whole digital download thing has gone too far. The recent release of *HL2: Episode One* digitally was not a problem as they released a 'hard copy' too. But now with the release of the *Rome: Total War - Alexander* expansion pack, I'm forced to download it or pay through the nose and get the whole *Total War* eras set, effectively penalising me for being a loyal customer and buying all their previous games and expansions.

I like to 'own' a game, not just have some blob of gigabytes floating in the ether which I have to pay £1.99 to keep on their server for 18 months. Imagine if *Monkey Island* was distributed digitally?

None of us would be able to boot it up again and wallow in the classic comedy. Jack Chapman

Sorry Jack, I have to disagree. Steam can be a royal pain in the arse, but personally, I love the fact I don't have to carry around a ton of game boxes when I move house or between PCs. Also, you mentioned Monkey Island - the new Sam & Max adventure game would never have had a chance of release if it wasn't for digital distribution. Check out the exclusive feature on page 38 and email or text us with your opinions on digi-downloads.

ART LESSON

While reading issue 170, I found a letter asking why games could not be considered art. I, for one, am ecstatic that games are at that level which is above (not below) the point at which a medium can be considered art.

Videogames are one of the only last remaining forms of entertainment that hasn't been polluted by the idea of art, and are purely about their unadulterated fun value. Because games are not art, it means we don't get pretentious idiots

So *Episode Two* is slated to have *Team Fortress 2* packaged with it? Back in the day there were a lot of high hopes for *TF2*, but there's a lot more competition now...

Dogen_D_Derrible

They made such a big deal about *Team Fortress 2* over the years. Then they went silent, and now it's gonna be given away free. That worries me slightly.

TheTingler

Even if it was just *Team Fortress 1.5* with a new lick of paint, I'd be way beyond chuffed. Anything that gets people playing *TFC* again is a good thing.

buckid

I like the art direction. The gaming scene doesn't need another realistic-looking online shooter, but a '60s spy comic-book-style shooter? Based on a great game? Sounds fun.

TheTingler, after seeing the video

Join in the forum fun at www.pczone.co.uk

MY IRON JUNG

For three years *ZONE* staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of analytical psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



DEAR DR JUNG,

Q I've heard rumours they may be making *Elite IV*. Can you persuade David Braben to confirm or deny it? Paul Knight

A David Braben told us that *Elite IV* was in serious development two years ago, a fact perhaps confirmed by the eternal presence of *Elite IV: The Next Encounter* as a Sept 2006 release - clearly a mix-up, but proof that the game is afoot. Starting out as a massively multiplayer game in 2000, then being channelled into a reduced multiplayer and single-player form, *Elite IV* seems to be happening. However, the big deal at Frontier Developments is currently scintillating console thriller *The Outsider*, so don't expect much information to filter into the airwaves just yet...

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q What with *Doctor Who* being cool again, and my five-year-old son not finding daleks as scary as he should, are we going to get a game? Big Bad Wilf

A It seems so Wilf, although little is known of it. An Australian film newsletter dated last year reveals that game company IR Gurus Interactive, of *Heroes Of The Pacific* fame and various Australia-rules sports games, had been charged with providing an interactive adventure for the gallivanting Timelord. Whether this is still true remains to be seen, but what with the BBC spreading the brand into new shows and mobile phones, a game must be soon. Could the sonic screwdriver be the new crowbar? Watch this space.

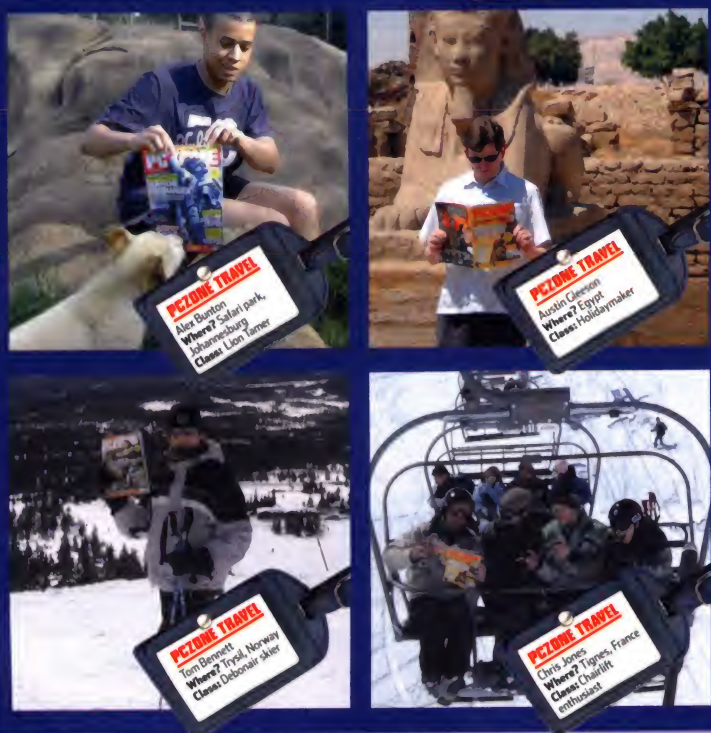
LETTERS



@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ letters, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe street, london, nw1 6nw

PC ZONE Around the World SPECIAL!



We want photos of you with PC ZONE in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

pretending to like a certain game because it makes them look sophisticated.

Think about it – can you honestly say you've never looked at the Mona Lisa, listened to a Morrissey album or watched any world cinema film without thinking, "what am I supposed to be getting here?" Who cares that the so-called 'arty' crowd look down PC games? It's their loss, not ours, and we can be smug in the knowledge that they're idiotic enough to fall for the con which is the word 'art' and are childish enough to pretend to one another that they get a kick out of looking at an unmade bed. Adam Frost

Hmmm. I don't know about your notion that art is a 'pollution' or a

'con' – our lives are enriched by genuine artists such as Stanley Kubrick, Edward Hopper and The Beatles. Art can be entertaining and unpretentious, and I do believe videogames should be considered a valid artform. However, we're a games mag first and foremost, and as such we'll always remain the place to read about how a cool sniper weapon can take out a zombie's rotting head from 30 metres rather than a 3,000-word wank-off about didacticism in digital culture.

O! MEDIEVAL 2! NO!

I'm counting the days until *Medieval 2: Total War's* arrival. I've been an avid fan of all of the series – they're the

danglers. But please, please, please ask them to put the map screen back to how it was in the original *Medieval: TW!*

I work as a surveyor and it's not very exciting, but when I get home for a few hours, I can be a great warlord. I can change the face of the world right from my sweaty leather armchair in my flea-pit. However, to get in the correct mindset and direct my armies, I need to feel as Napoleon or perhaps Hannibal may have felt – looking at a map of the world with 'ickie statues of my armies spread out before me. It's simple and it works. We don't need crappy animations of men plodding around and stuff!

Tell them to spend their time sorting out naval battles instead of these useless aesthetic nuances – the action is supposed to be in the battles, not on the campaign map. Glen Firkins

It's only a few short months until release in October, so I don't know whether The Creative Assembly will have time to take your criticisms of the map on board, Glen. All I can say is that we've seen it running and *Medieval 2: Total War* looks anything but a disappointment... **PCZ**



Just thought I'd let you know about the bits in *Oblivion* I don't like. Walking is pointlessly slow. Thanks for your time, bye. Tim

Don't ever do that again! I've just got rid of the image from when the press leaked the story. I refer to your Prescott quip on the letters page last month!

oi pcz if u dont print this in issue 172 youre all goin to wake up very confused in some island in the pacific. Ill be nice and give u some peaches.

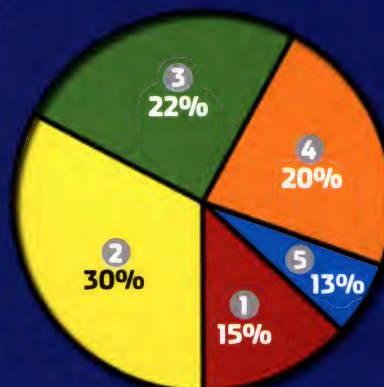
Thanks 4 the wow demo – am now utterly addicted, divorce on way. U have ruined my life – or my wives. Mikey

To text, send your messages to 87103, putting PCZTXT at the beginning of the message, then leaving a space, then continuing with your text – and don't forget your name. Texts should be no more than 160 characters long.

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The Big Question

After *Crysis*, what are Crytek going to call their next game?



- 1 Cry Wolfenstein: 15%
- 2 Crying At The Discotheque: 30%
- 3 Crypes (It's a startlingly large boss): 22%
- 4 Alan Cry vs The Crybots: 20%
- 5 Cryobanana Balloon Chase: 13%

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**BEAST
WAY**

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A full-page magazine cover for 'Crisis' featuring a soldier in camouflage gear aiming a rifle at alien creatures in a tropical setting. A large barrel is suspended in the air, and another soldier is on the ground. The title 'COVER STORY' is in yellow and 'CRISIS' is in large white letters.

COVER STORY

CRISIS

Wrap up warm, the shooter of 2007 is coming and hell's thermostat has gone way down...



MULDER AND SCULLY are nowhere to be seen, the Men in Black haven't been heard from since the '90s and the US president is already struggling with the buckles in his fighter jet – this alien invasion is ice-cold, and it's going to take a bad dude to kick the scum back into whatever wormhole they've crawled from. In a tropical paradise being rapidly terraformed by an invading race, a world of options is being made available. *Far Cry* was praised for its open-ended mission structure and often needlessly huge levels, but *Crysis* is taking it further. The question is, are you a bad enough dude?

PAGE

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PCZONE

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

THOSE LEFT BEHIND...

DO YOU REMEMBER that amazing bit in *F.E.A.R.* where you're in the car, all those bikes are chasing you and you hit that roadblock and the car flips over? Or how about that bit in *SiN Episodes: Emergence* where you're in the car and Jessica is driving you through AI-controlled traffic and you're moving around a completely interactive car and killing those around you at high speed?

If so, congratulations. You're from a parallel dimension in which what's promised in games actually manages to appear in the final release. Your presence here has ripped a hole in the space-time continuum and we're all liable to be sucked into some kind of mystery vortex alongside the Daleks and the Cybermen. Well done indeed.

I can understand how it happens – developers have wild ideas that eventually can't be hammered into a game's format (cough, *STALKER*), or can't be put in due to time and money constraints (cough, *Fable*). Wild willy-waving of graphics, AI and general game cleverness has always been a fundamental part of gaming – but wouldn't it be nice if the publishers didn't set the bar from which they intend hype to spew quite so high?

All of which is why I'm on my knees and slowly rocking back and forth as I contemplate *Crysis* – this month's cover game. It looks and sounds so good that I'm convinced it must be some sort of trick. A hoax of some kind. Please, please let what the men from Crytek say be true... And please let the zero-G bit in the alien spacecraft not be another Xen...

Will Porter

Will Porter, deputy editor

VALVE'S TRIPLE WHAMMY

Half-Life 2 developer reveals a few more juicy Episode Two details and announces two new games

half-life2.com/ | ETA: TBA

VALVE NEVER DO things by halves, do they? Not content with just announcing more details of the forthcoming *Half-Life 2: Episode Two* during EA's recent Summer Showcase event in San Francisco, Valve's founder Gabe Newell decided he was going to stun all and sundry with three major announcements instead, including the reveal of former vapourware *Team Fortress 2*.

Newell began by showing us a trailer for the next *Half-Life 2* chapter, in which we were treated to a series of impressive destruction sequences, including the total obliteration of a titanic bridge on which Alyx clung for dear life while yelling to Gordon for help. Newell explained that these visual spectacles were generated

by an all-new system called Cinematic Physics, designed by Valve's newest employee Gray Horsfield – the brains behind the destruction sequences in *King Kong* and *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy.

Bundled with *Episode Two* will be *Team Fortress 2*, which utilises a bold graphical style reminiscent of Pixar's *The Incredibles* and features a new flame thrower-toting class called Pyro. "We've given *TF2* a very different look. We've added a new lighting model to give the models an illustrative and painterly style," said Newell. Last, but certainly not least, we were treated to a demonstration of a new game called *Portal*, which is also set to ship with *Episode Two*. "For *Portal*, we're trying to explore a new first-person gaming experience set in the *Half-Life 2* universe,"

announced Newell. "It'll implement support for non Euclidean space and physics."

What this translates to is a manic FPS in which you can create numerous teleport gates in walls, floors and ceilings, a formula that could provide some of the most mind-bending FPS action ever seen. While it's still early days for Steam, and despite the success it's already enjoyed, it does seem that Valve are keen to attract more customers to the digitally distributed cause with this show of generosity – *Episode Two* bundled with *Team Fortress 2* and *Portal*. We're travelling to Valve in preparation for an exclusive feature next month to see if it's all too good to be true. But we strongly suspect it's not...

**STOP PRESS!****ITCH THAT WITCH**

There's an expansion pack coming for *Battle For Middle-Earth II* entitled *The Rise Of The Witch King*. Expect it to focus on evil and depravity in general.

PETS WIN PRIZES

In a rather Nintendog-gy move, EA are to surgically implant pets into *The Sims 2* with *The Sims 2: Pets*. We really can't wait.

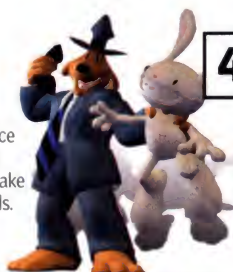
CHRISTMAS CANCELLED

E3 as we know it is no more. A lower-key 'E3 Media Festival' is due to replace it – read our in-depth Special Report on the subject next issue.

38

Sam & Max

The dynamic resurgence of a clothed dog and a naked rabbit-thing make us do happy cartwheels.



42

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men

The dangerous pairing of a medicated psychopath and a death-row mercenary makes us do happy somersaults.



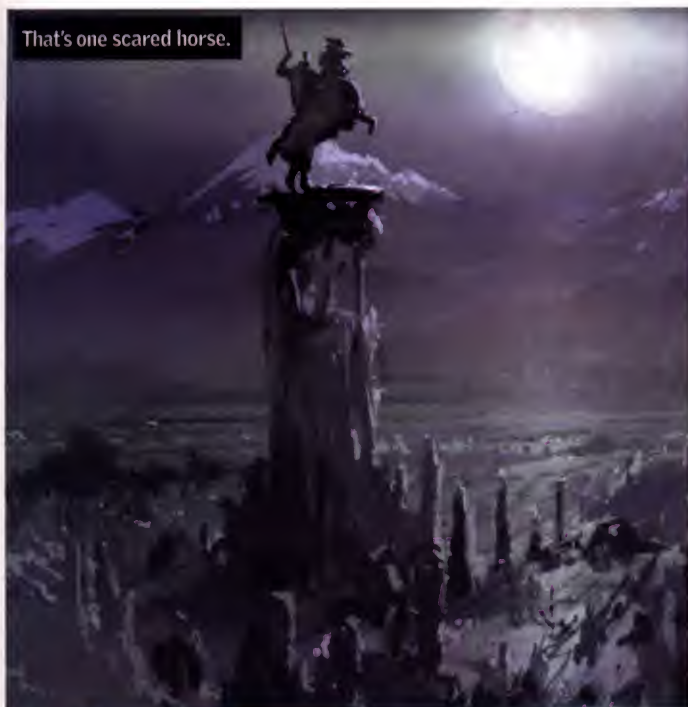
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Crysis

The gob-smacking mixture of *Far Cry* with very mana from heaven makes us shiver, and then gently weep.



That's one scared horse.



It looks rather inhospitable there.



'Stig Of The Dump: The Next Generation'.



TOLKIEN: THE EARLY YEARS

Prepare to save Middle-earth in the year 80BF (as in Before Frodo)

www.whitecouncil.ea.com | ETA: Q3 2007

EA HAVE ANNOUNCED what we all knew anyway: that they're working on a new *Lord Of The Rings* RPG called *The White Council*. Billed as an *Oblivion*-beater (then again, what RPG isn't these days?), *The White Council* will take place 80 years before the events of the *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy.

Placing you in the steaming boots of a wannabe adventurer, you'll first have to gain the respect of The White Council (Elrond, Galadriel, Gandalf, Cirdan, Saruman and Radagast). Once you're in

the club, you'll be sent off to fight the forces of evil on the council's behalf. You'll even get to join up with the council members themselves in order to thwart a nasty man called The Necromancer.

With the expected barrage of stunning visuals backing up a solid plot and freeform exploration elements, *The White Council* is worth keeping a lidless eye on. Already confirmed on Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, sources have kicked us to hint at a PC release as well. We'll have more very soon. Promise.

Happy, happy, joystick joy

Voting begins at the people's games awards

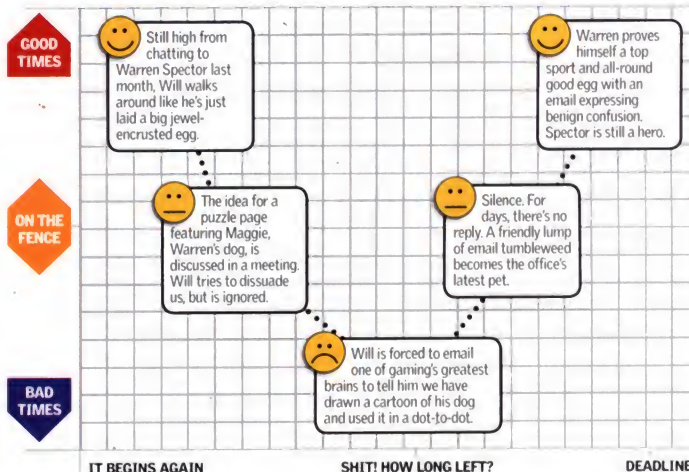
BECAUSE THEY'RE FUNDAMENTALLY fabbo, and not un-entirely due to sharing offices with the organisers, the time of year has come where we point the *ZONE* readership in the direction of the Golden Joysticks – the bestest, most respected and most fair of all the gaming industry's many excuses for drinks and self-congratulation. Simply visit www.goldenjoystick.co.uk and you'll be able to view a long list of the deserving, including stunners like *F.E.A.R.*, *HL2: Episode One*, *Civilization IV*, *Oblivion* and *Football Manager 2006*. A few clicks of the mouse will direct your appreciation to the deserving, so get voting. Both glory and valiant defeat are in your hands.



STUFF

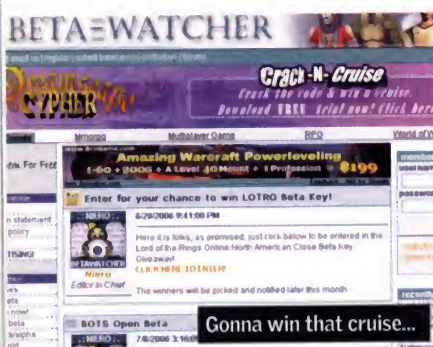
Those yearning for a *Max Payne* vibe haven't been catered for in recent months, or indeed years. So perhaps ears should prick up on *El Matador*, a game first touted in the days of *Far Cry* as having a fair amount of jungle gameplay – but which has now reappeared replete with towns and their requisite construction areas. Yes it has bullet-time, but can it stand up to the grizzled painkiller-popping one? Review next issue.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



BETA WHAT YOU FANCY

On trial with PC gaming's crash-test dummies



Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ pavel barter, pc zone,
2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw



Reporter
Pavel Barter

UNLESS YOU'RE CONVULSING in a grotty inner-city medical ward with a dose of Elephantitis, intestines spilling from your foaming mouth and an eyeball growing on your privates, testing stuff can be rather enjoyable. Beyond the Russian Roulette of clinical drug trials, no-one can resist the allure of a complementary sausage at the local supermarket or free samples of new improved Shat Cola™ down your local precinct.

Better still, become a PC game lab rat and you can play early builds of games for free – then tell the developers that their AI sucks eggs and that green is so not a good look for the hero. An unpaid stay-at-home affair, beta testing is a world away from full-time studio game testing and it can be bloody gruelling. But then again, *Rome: Total War* wasn't built in a day.

EARLY TASTE OF HELL

"From gameplay mechanics to balance to compatibility testing across a massive variety of hardware, the beta process is invaluable," says Bill Roper, who's busily testing for his upcoming title, *Hellgate: London*. "It also allows us

to see a plethora of gameplay strategies, inventive ideas and plain exploits."

Developers evaluate and troubleshoot their games in much the same way that movie studios host test screenings to check audience reaction. In the case of *Civilization IV: Warlords*, for example: "The beta stage allowed us to playtest and enhance the scenarios, and polish and develop the end-user experience," states producer Jesse Smith.

Each game company tends to have its own strategies, but Bill Roper argues that beta is generally a staged process that begins by showing early versions of the game to "friends and family", then to a small contingent of testers. "As time progresses, we open up a larger, closed beta where we have website sign-ups for a limited number of slots." Close to commercial release, a flood of gamers join the party for "open beta".

The Lord Of The Rings Online: Shadows Of Angmar "will have several different stages of testing," states Ed Blincoe of Turbine Studios. He explains: "The process ranges from phase 1.0 where we invite a few hundred people, through to short and sharp stress tests where we try and overload a server by inviting thousands of testers.

By the end of the beta, we'll have ramped up to full 'live'

service capacity to make sure the game is ready for shipping."

Some developers prefer to avoid the razzmatazz of open tests in favour of quieter affairs. Such was the case with *Football Manager 2007*, according to SI Games managing director Miles Jacobson. "We had a closed beta because it can be a bit pointless having 100,000 people playing and only 1,000 giving useful feedback. There can often be too much noise with public beta tests and they have to start a lot later than private ones. That's not to say that we won't do them again." Indeed, at the time of going to press, a *FM2007* beta comprised of Europe-wide fans from the community had begun in earnest.

CAN I HAVE A GO?

Wannabe guinea pigs should keep their eyes on sites like betawatcher.com, which provide news about beta phases and sign-ups. As for getting selected once registered, there's no proven formula because most of the time developers look for a wide range of system specs and player types – from casual to hardcore.

"Many people think that maxing out the 'Games You Play' or 'Games You Have Beta Tested' fields is all they need to do to get picked, but developers often





"When looking for beta testers, developers often want players that don't have that much experience"

Ryan Logsdon aka Niero, editor, betawatcher.com

want players that don't have that much experience," explains Ryan Logsdon, aka Niero, editor of betawatcher.com. "After all, the goal of a beta test is to get a testing group as similar to their future customer base as possible, which is likely to encompass all kinds of gamers."

Still, many franchises gauge opinion from their loving fanbase. For *Civilization IV*, Firaxis recruited gamers that impressed from the *Civilization III: Conquests* beta team. They also picked rabidly passionate *Civ* fans. "After bringing all these people together, we asked them to recommend more people. This large group did a heroic service on *Civ IV*. Fortunately for us, they were also willing to help out with the *Warlords* expansion," says Jesse Smith.

Don't expect an easy ride – beta games can be unstable and buggy, making playability as frustrating as a 19th-century corset. Just remember that you have a job to do. "Even the best games become duds if they crash a lot," frowns betawatcher.com's Niero. "*Anarchy Online* was almost completely

unplayable when it was first released. The testers knew it would be and were very vocal about this. In contrast, *Dark Age of Camelot* was one of the best betas I've ever been involved with. The development team worked really well together and were very open to tester suggestions."

Niero recalls a beta bug in *Star Wars Galaxies* where players could stuff their backpacks with clothes and armour and corresponding stats would be added to their character. "In *World Of Warcraft*, there was a spot where enemies would spawn under the ground, so you'd be running along an empty hallway and suddenly your life would start going down. Very unnerving. I always seem to have a knack for finding ways to 'fall through' the earth in the games I tested, I've done it in *EverQuest*, *WOW*, *SWG*, *DAOC*, *Asheron's Call* and others..."

FIREBALL FOCUS

Bill Roper, famous for his work on the *Diablo* series, recalls a bug from *Diablo II*. "Players could cast increasingly faster

Put to the test

The biggest betas lapping on the shores of PC gaming



Age Of Conan – Hyborian Adventures

Steroid-fuelled meathead Conan has been under the microscope for some time, although Funcom promise to add more testers as the game moves closer to launch at the end of 2006. Keep an eye on betawatcher.com.



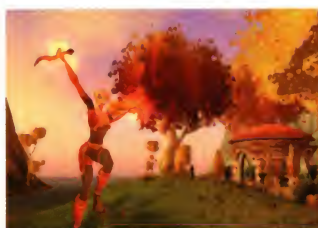
LOTR Online: Shadows Of Angmar

"The beta is an important time to polish the game and squash bugs," says Turbine's Ed Blincoe. "Beta also helps our marketing team and publishers as it's a key vehicle to drive pre-launch awareness."



Dark Messiah Of Might & Magic

Closed testing has begun on Ubisoft's new strategy, said to be *Thief* nicking the best bits from *Elder Scrolls*. "I'm downloading it now," draws one *M&M* forum member. "My hatred for you has no bounds," replies another.



World Of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

No official announcement on this, but Blizzard's hugely successful public *WOW* beta must have set some sort of precedent. We're guessing that there'll be an open beta with limited sign-up.

fireballs with the Sorceress. It took a specific mouse-click pattern on the part of the user, but the end result was a veritable machine gun effect of fiery death. We fixed the issue, but it was something we might never have discovered ourselves."

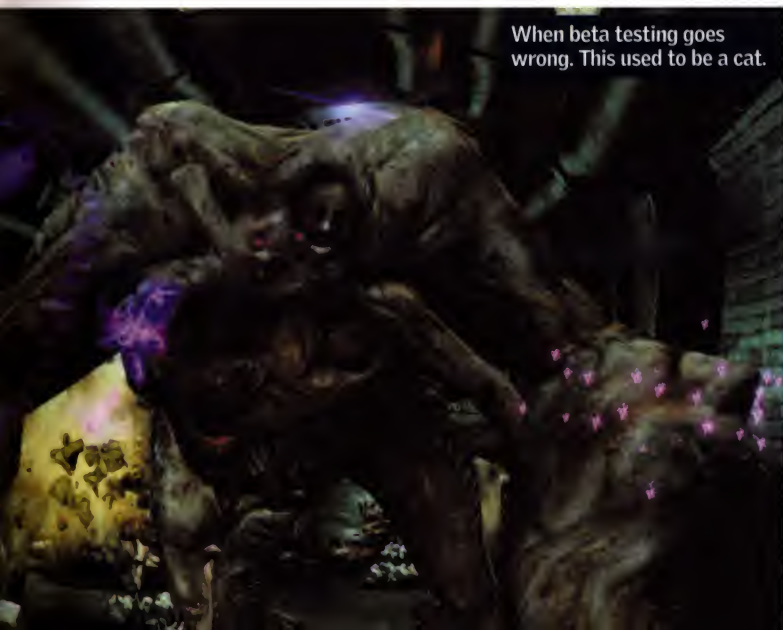
Testers normally offer feedback via private forums, although programmers have been known to visit the tester's house to study a bug in the flesh. Such is the appeal of beta: not only do you become one of the first people to play a new PC game, but you gain grandiose feelings of self-importance.

Because beta testing is an excuse to brag, it's hardly surprising that some accounts change hands for crazy amounts of money. "Both *WOW* and *EQII* keys were on eBay and similar sites," says Niero. "Whenever we do giveaways or contests on our site for beta keys, we usually get a handful of people offering to buy them... One guy offered me \$400 for an *EQII* key."

Selling keys is illegal and game companies can cancel accounts at the drop of a hat, but it's a Willy Wonka world where beta keys are the golden ticket. Many PC gamers would give their right arm for one, and in that respect it's not that different to medical research. Now, who's up for a dose of smallpox? **PC**



When beta testing goes wrong. This used to be a cat.



**COMING
SOON...**RTS grunts rarely have
anything to be happy about.

COMPANY OF HEROES

Andy Robinson is in good companyDEVELOPER Relic PUBLISHER THQ WEBSITE www.companyofheroesgame.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 157

THE LOWDOWN

Worked on by the studio
behind *Warhammer*
40,000: Dawn Of War

Prettiest WWII RTS Ever

Incredibly destructible
environmentsImpressive AI creates
living, breathing soldiers

Unique resource system

How many Germans are
there left?**ETA
SEPT**

THANKS TO SOME beautifully rendered grit and grime, advanced AI and impressive destructible environments, *Company Of Heroes* has remained lodged in our heads since it was first unveiled at E3 last year. World War II and the RTS are far from strangers, but Relic, they of *Homeworld* and *Dawn Of War* fame, believe there's still much to be explored in the old theatre of war, and everything we've seen so far in *Company Of Heroes* proves them right.

The first thing that sticks out above the competition is the game's stunning visuals; *COH* is easily the best-looking WWII RTS we've ever seen. Thankfully though, the visuals go a bit deeper than just making the tank battle damage look pretty. Every object in the game has physical properties and can be damaged or destroyed. In most RTS games you're confined to venturing only to where the level designers want you to go, but in *COH* you can blow down each and every wall or barrier that blocks your path. Buildings crumble and collapse, roads crack and tanks explode, leaving their empty shells scorched on the battlefield.

This impressive level of interactivity isn't just for show either – it's a huge strategic resource; downed vehicles and rubble can be used as cover by your infantry, and holes blown in the side of

buildings can instantly be shot out of by your men inside. After a large town skirmish, you'll barely be able to recognise your battle-damaged surroundings.

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

So far, so much a prettier and zoomed-in re-enactment of *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* you might say. Equally as impressive as the interactive battlegrounds, Relic promise, is the AI in the game. Never again will RTS soldiers wait blankly for your orders and stand ineptly in a hail of bullets. *Company Of Heroes* will create believable, and beautifully animated, living infantry who move cautiously through streets, duck and dive for cover and generally do their damndest to stay alive. While they won't quite finish the game for you, it's nice to hear RTS promised that won't need your constant attention.

One of the things that makes the advanced AI so erm, advanced though, is the way that infantry move like real squads; units will do their best to remain out of sight, staying on the edge of roads and appearing cautious to the world around them. When attacked they'll run for cover, pick their targets carefully and, if necessary, sit tight and wait for reinforcements to arrive.

While *Company Of Heroes* is undoubtedly a more action-focused RTS,

resource gathering also plays an important role in gameplay. To generate resources you're tasked with securing strategic locations around the map, with the map itself also divided into 'sectors', each generating a different kind of resource. Fuel, munitions and manpower are the three main flavours, with fuel being needed to summon vehicles, manpower to train infantry and munitions for ammo and upgrades. As such, the securing and defending of said resources becomes a very important part of the *Heroes* experience.

From what we've seen so far, we're more excited for *Company Of Heroes* than any other WWII RTS in recent memory, and when you bring Relic's stellar track record into the equation, we're confident we won't be disappointed. **PCT**

**"Take that, Nazi
stonework!"**

WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...



THAT'S USING YOUR HEAD

The artificial intelligence is geared so that every soldier will use real-world tactics and react to the ever-changing battlefield. When engaged, soldiers will automatically find cover and return fire.

HMMM... UPGRADES

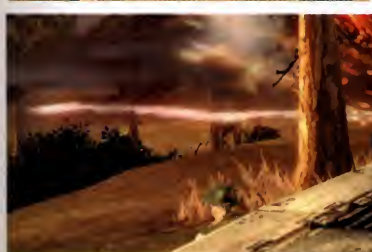
You can upgrade infantry and vehicle units using munitions points. Basic infantry, for example, can be upgraded to carry light machine guns and sticky mines.

COMMAND & CONQUER

When you gain experience levels there are three paths you can take through the tech tree: armour, infantry or airborne. Through this you can unlock unique abilities like paratrooper drops or tank bonuses.

DIY WITH BAZOOKAS

Use the damage modelling to open up lines of attack in the game. Bullets will ricochet off the side of buildings, but with a bazooka you can make a nice hole to shoot through.



Believable and beautifully animated infantry move through the streets and do their damndest to stay alive



Impressive physics and highly intelligent soldier AI promise to make *Company Of Heroes* the most intense, cinematic, World War II RTS ever. Yes, ever.





THE MECHS' BIG THING...

BATTLEFIELD 2142

Richie Shoe-mech-er larges it up in Stockholm with the developers of the world's favourite combined-arms kill-fest

DEVELOPER Digital Illusions PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE www.electronicarts.co.uk/games/8414 PREVIOUSLY IN... 170

THE LOWDOWN

Those heavily armed combat trousers	✓
Character customisation and ranking	✓
Promises to reduce the bug count	✓
BF on a bigger scale...	✓
...Perhaps too big	✗

LOOKING MORE LIKE a *Pop Idol* contestant than the person responsible for a multi-million dollar franchise of sanctioned murder simulations, Marcus Nilsson, the senior producer for *Battlefield 2142*, is not your typical high-ranking game developer. Despite seeming slightly uncomfortable at having to enthuse in front of a bunch of dour UK journalists, he talks a lot and at pace. He's also very apologetic and aware of the minor, though not insignificant, flaws that have coloured expectations of the *Battlefield* series as it enters its fourth iteration. Though it's slightly tricky to follow what he's talking about – he veers from *Star Wars* to server code in one breath – (thank the lord for recording devices), it's clear he isn't one to paper over cracks. "I'm sorry about the carpet," he says out of the blue, moving all eyes to witness the scuffed wooden floor. "We're moving office."

To a nicer part of town, obviously, since Digital Illusions are awash with cash after selling 300 billion copies, more or less, of *Battlefield* product. Pretty much entirely owned (some might say 'p4wned') by EA, Digital Illusions are no longer the little-guy developer the hardcore used to rally around.

Instead, they have slowly become a developer to be reviled by corporate-loathing EA-phobes for pumping out sequels, wafer-thin (albeit cheap) mini-expansions and recycling old technology. Young Will Porter said as much a few issues ago; that *2142*, the futuristic sequel to *BF2*'s contemporary vision, was a kind of updated mod – as was *Battlefield Vietnam* to *BF1942*. It's a comparison that's perhaps unfair, since *Vietnam* was, relative to its predecessor, reliably off-kilter. Here in 2006, having played the latest *Battlefield* shortly after having to sit through a series of 'we're doing this better' presentations from various Digital Illusions luminaries, we can confidently predict that players will be enjoying not just a vastly improved game, but a more polished and smoother *Battlefield* experience – just as soon as the carpets go down in the new DICE HQ.

LET THEM EAT QUAKE

As is the tendency with most sequels, *Battlefield 2142* offers an evolutionary advance, where gameplay has been refined and the scale expanded since the

The true fog of war.



original *BF1942*. Maps have become more elaborate; vehicles more varied and having exhausted all previous wars that would reliably fit the template, it seemed obvious that the future was the way to go.

This time however, Digital Illusions will have quite a fight for the market share. By making the game faster-paced – or rather, by helping players stay alive longer – and with vehicles edging closer to the *Aliens/Starship Troopers* mould, the game seems to be encroaching on enemy territory, in a very literal sense. *Quake Wars* looks to be doing much the same thing and, of course, *Unreal* pitched its flag in this future arena years ago. Both games would on first impressions appear to be offering a more focused and accessible FPS experience. *Battlefield's* trump card, however, is its

THE STORY SO FAR...

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS



EAGLE HAS LANDED
Codename Eagle is where the *Battlefield* series began, spiritually and chronologically.

2000



PARTY LIKE IT'S 1942
Two centuries is a long time in game design – was it only five years ago?

2002



ROCK 'N' ROLL WAR
Battlefield Vietnam (aka '*Battlefield v1.5*'). But the war didn't quite fit the gameplay.

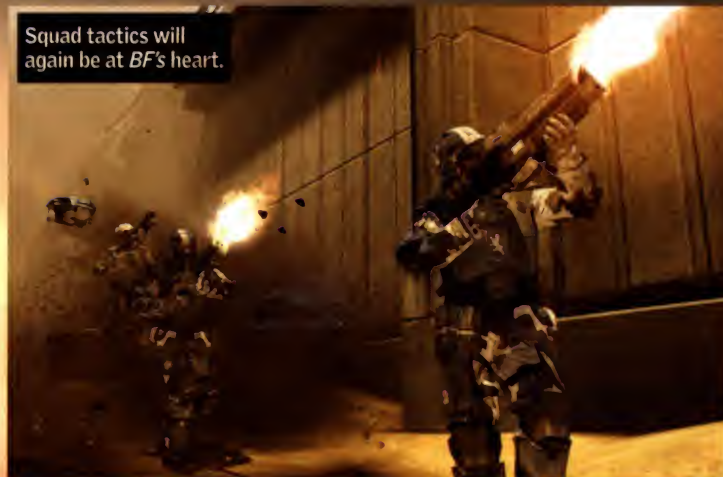
2004

CHINA CRISIS
BF2 delivered on the multiplayer war front, but server problems tarnished its reputation.

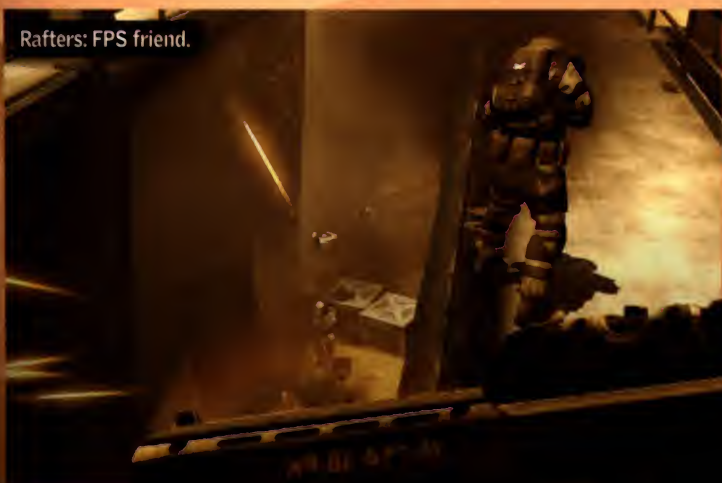
2005



But as *Robocop* showed us, he can't walk down stairs.



Squad tactics will again be at *BF's* heart.



Rafts: FPS friend.

scale. Its go-anywhere, do-anything (within reason) approach has always been initially frustrating, increasingly so with each passing game, but that's countered by the many and varied approaches to victory that can be discovered and perfected. As bewilderment turns to mild addiction, each *Battlefield* has become a behemoth of replayability that no other FPS can touch.

MECH IT SO

Nowhere is the scale of *2142* bettered than in the much trumpeted Titan mode, where two hovering gargantua must be taken down by the opposing sides, by controlling missile silos on the surface below. With shields down the Titans can be boarded, from



Where there's *BF*, there's dust trails.

It's all about customisation and persistence, borrowed from an unlikely source: **WOW**



And this time, they're noob-friendly.



"Don't look now, but..."



Now that's a winter wonderland.

It beta be good

Sign up for the 2142 bug hunt



Super Soakers have come a long way in 150 years.

Not that we're suggesting for one moment that *BF2142* requires urgent gameplay attention, but as has been the case in MMOG land since the likes of 'EverCrack' was first shot through the eyeballs of the world's gamers, game makers have realised that if anyone's likely to knock a game into shape, it's the paying customer. To that end, *Battlefield 2142* will enjoy a short but intense period of public beta testing this very month – August. How long the testing will last is undecided, but should you choose to enlist, always remember you'll be playing to search for bugs, not to have fun, OK?

which should spring tense firefights down sinuous corridors, until eventually the flying brick erupts and heralds victory for its attackers. Nilsson enthusiastically equates Titan assaults with the memorable boarding scene from *Star Wars: A New Hope*, where the rebels waited for the stormtroopers to pour in.

It's an admirable and evocative objective, but after an hour of playing the game before being herded into a room to eat salad, it was difficult to judge how much of that tension will be felt: most of us in attendance were happy to continue our *BF2* revelry and duke it out on terra firma (such is the way of things when half of the combatants have little clue as to what's going on).

If the jury's still out on the new Titan mode, it didn't take long to offer a verdict on the new vehicles. Aircraft are slower than *BF2*'s jets and easier to fly, armour battles are more interesting thanks to the temporary immobility caused by EMP weapons – and the so-called combat walkers are easily the most intimidating sight to behold. These veritable trousers-of-ownage are bristling with weapons that can take on



"Say again, control. A harpoon and tow-what?"

And then there were four BF2's rank-and-file selection has been streamlined. Hang on... No medics?



Support: the heterosexual beefcakes of *BF2142*, able to equip themselves with anti-tank rifles, AA rocket launchers or heavy machine guns.



Recon: equally handy with a light assault gun or a sniper rifle, this guy is a combination of the Special Forces class and Sniper from *BF2*.



Engineer: this lot still carry the spanners about, but they can also drop auto-sentry turrets which are essential in defending Titans.



Assault: most *BF2* armies use medics as frontline grunts, so it was obvious to meld them into the Assault class. Carrying Revive-o-tronic is optional.

man or machine quite happily. Of course, they're equipped with an Achilles heel (or, rather, knee), but their presence alone can be enough to swiftly rearrange a front line.

LET'S STICK TOGETHER

Even if they're a touch too contemporary in their design to fit with the chronology, the vehicles certainly feel more useful than in previous games. Generally, up until now, APCs have been treated like second-rate tanks by *Battlefield* players, who would rather hop into a jeep to get anywhere fast, or heavy armour to cause maximum damage. In *2142*, APCs and transport VTOLs are a vital piece of kit, since without them the only way to get aboard an enemy Titan is to spawn alongside your squad leader. APCs house turrets that with a right-click can be ejected into the sky and guided towards the launch bay of the enemy mothership. To be launched skyward in these pods is an unexpectedly stomach-churning experience (a fun one too, since you can use your pod as a guided bomb – although that feature is likely to be nerfed quite heavily). In short, Digital Illusions are ramping up the teamplay requirements.

"We don't want to turn away the lone-wolf players," says Nilsson. "In fact, that has always been part of our philosophy; to allow you to do pretty much what you want. The idea is to further reward those who play as a team." Nilsson explains the game's system of awarding teams with what he calls "field upgrades"; temporary unlocks that may present a particularly

altruistic medic with more effective healing abilities. Squads will also be able to share information on their heads-up displays, so that troops in the same unit will be able to detect the same enemy units, and depending on their rank, may even be able to discern certain unit types rather than seeing the standard red blob on the edge of their visors.

Ranking is certainly one aspect in which Digital Illusions are looking to expand the *Battlefield* experience. Rather ambiguously we're told the game will have 43 ranks for players to attain, three of which will be reserved for the top 200 players across the globe. Ranks, apart from inferring bragging rights, will further unlock over 40 items that you'll be able to customise your kit with, from new weapons and better ammo to all sorts of upgrades like scopes and stabilisers. It's all about customisation and persistence, both features Digital Illusions are borrowing from an unlikely source: *World Of Warcraft*.

IS THIS FANTASY?

Bet you didn't see that coming. The thinking goes that by cutting the player classes down to four (see 'And Then There Were Four', above) and then allowing players to customise their equipment, you feel you are more unique in the world. The theory certainly holds up, and although Digital Illusions have no intention of dishing out magic spells or populating the servers with vermin in order to facilitate the levelling-up process, as a mechanic designed to pull players back into the fray



These boys are real butch an' all.



"Hey bud, the Generic Sci-Fi Spaceship Expo is the other way."



Handy for school runs and shopping.



The future will be hazy.



Dogfighting has come a long way since Victorian times.

time and time again, it's one that's worked phenomenally well already.

But will the whole thing work? There's no doubt that the graphics will be top-notch – seeing the mechs stomping about is worth the entrance price alone. The evolution of the gameplay, albeit faint, is also unlikely to disappoint, unless of course you've already tired of *Battlefield's* trademark capture-and-hold mechanic. No, the issue many people have is with bugs, and on that front Nilsson is bullish.

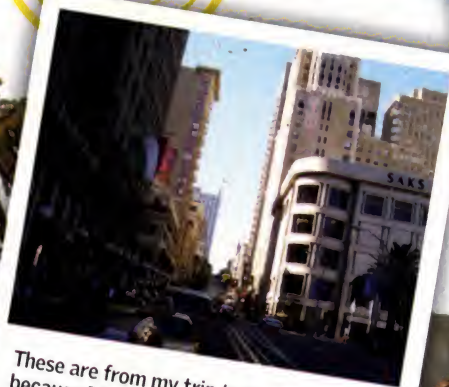
"We're building on existing technology; the visual quality is higher, the rendering is faster, the server-browsing code will be a lot better and the whole front-end

is totally redone. I can guarantee that the launch of this product is going to be much less buggy than it was in *BF2*. We're taking quality very seriously."

Well that's good to know, although bugs are rarely an issue when the game itself is so engrossing. While we have our doubts about Titan mode (what's wrong with just the one Titan?), we're also aware than an hour playing one map in an alpha build is no measure of quality. *Battlefield* has established itself as the premier multiplayer FPS for very good reason and there's little to suggest that Digital Illusions are about to muck things up. Not on their nice new carpet anyway. **PC**



This is Randy Thom, Skywalker Sound's audio genius. Friendly smile too.



These are from my trip to San Francisco, because I know you're terribly interested.



It may look like it, but I can assure you this man is not having a pee on the bridge.

THE SOUND OF SCARFACE

Steve Hogarty heads to Skywalker Ranch to get an earful of Scarface



San Fran's Fisherman's Wharf: wheelchair accessible and seafood galore.



Randy Thom has worked on tons of films, including *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*.



He may look like he's deep in thought, but actually, he's wondering where his tie is.

THIS TIME LAST week, I was hanging out with George Lucas. Me, the guy this magazine was obliged to employ under Future's Equal Opportunities program. When I say hanging out, of course I mean I met the man briefly. And when I say I met the man briefly, of course I mean I watched him eat a salad from behind my menu, from another room. The fear of accidentally shouting something nasty about *Attack Of The Clones* was immense. I'm not worthy.

The setting for our social non-interaction was Lucas's very own Skywalker Ranch, the open country workplace of the *Star Wars* creator and the home of Skywalker Sound. I hadn't come to the idyllic Californian hills overlooking San Francisco to cower from George Lucas behind a list of midday meals though; I hadn't even come to cover a LucasArts game. The reason I'd been flown to this nerd's paradise was to wrap my ears around the new *Scarface* game's bombastic new sound engine.

HEAR YE

Still starry-eyed, I found myself in a room with Randy Thom, one of the most famous sound designers in the movie industry, with movies such as *Apocalypse Now*, *Star Wars*, *Indiana*

Jones, *The Incredibles*, *Starship Troopers*, *Forrest Gump* and *Harry Potter* under his belt. "Gaming is going all kinds of interesting places," he tells me, "it's following the model of film story-telling in some ways and not in other ways, breaking new grounds in terms of interactivity. I think there are all kinds of possibilities in terms of sound out there that games haven't explored yet."

SOUND ADVICE

So why is it that Radical Entertainment have decided to make their way to Skywalker Sound? "The reason we're here today," explains Rob Donald, sound designer at Radical, "is because we wanted to do our post-production audio as though it were a movie. Typically in games, there really is no post-production – it's just a scramble to get everything working and get all the sounds playing in the game. So we decided to bring all of our audio production outside of Radical and into a studio environment. We travelled around and saw quite a few different studios before we settled on Skywalker being the place we should do this."

A good choice it was too. Working with Skywalker Sound gives Radical access not only to some of the most accomplished sound experts in the industry, but they also get access to a huge sound library, with things like lightsaber.wav and whydidihavetobesnakes.wav hidden inside. Similarly, with the *Scarface* movie licence, the sound team get to use a lot of the movie's original content too.

"With *Scarface*, we had access to the original Giorgio Moroder score," claims Donald, "so that was pretty cool. We discovered a load of music that wasn't in the film which we could use in the game. We have over seven hours of licensed music too – I couldn't believe it when I saw it laid out on a timeline, I'd no idea how we'd get it all on a disc. We've two hours of score on there as well, there's a huge amount of audio content to choose from. About 80 per cent of the DVD is just audio."

And if you've not already seen the list of celebrity names signed up for voice



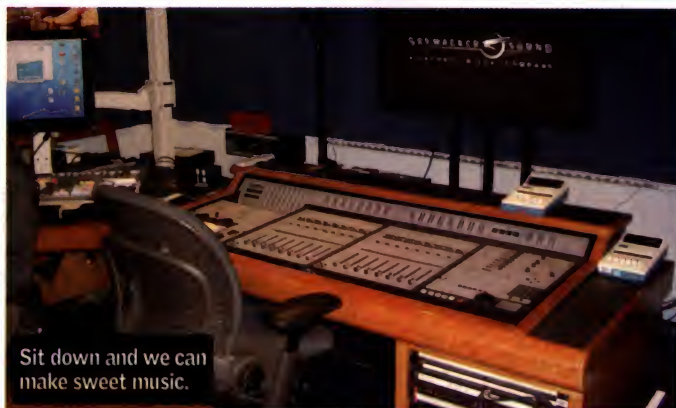
When the killing's over, why not stop for a cocktail?



Skywalker Sound's Juan Peralta made that mixer his bitch, right before my eyes.

Here comes the science bit

What's a MIDI bus when it's at home?



Sit down and we can make sweet music.

So how does sound come out of a hard drive and into the insides of our brains? Surely that's some sort of sorcery? Well, they've got a magic box. "It's like a huge PlayStation which we develop all of the audio content on," explains Radical Entertainment's Rob Donald. "Then we've got laptops running *Scarface*, and it's all connected via MIDI to a Mackie controller, an external mixing deck."

OK, then what? "We're able to send all of our different sounds to different buses on the desk. So we've got pedestrian dialogue on one fader, Tony Montana's dialogue on another fader, explosions on another – we've got about 20 channels. Say you're in an alleyway doing a drug deal in the game, we have a snapshot mix for that particular event and the faders move to where we want them to be. We can edit that in real-time, whether we want Tony to be a bit louder or just control the pitch, we can do it throughout the game."

Obviously, with *Scarface* being developed for hardware ranging from PCs to PS2s, there are some restrictions. "We're doing some things especially for PC," explains Donald. "We're making as much use of Creative EAX as we can. There are a lot of memory restrictions when working with videogames though, sample rate does have to come down. Having said that, for one or two of the sounds we kept the sample rate at 32kbps – like Tony's M16, we really wanted that to cut through in the opening mansion scene." Bang bang.

talent, expect to see some bizarre inclusions – Tommy Lee, Ice T, Bam Margera, the list goes on. "The voice talent is pretty huge in this game," explains Donald. "We got to work with Cheech and Chong, James Woods, and I also got to fly out to London to do

the Ricky Gervais recordings – he plays a drug dealer's contact. On the same day we recorded Lemmy from Motorhead, that was bizarre. He plays a gun vendor. In his contract, he said he had to have a bottle of Jack Daniels at the session and a car to pick him up."

MEATBALLS, ANYONE?

And what of Tony 'F***' Montana? "Al Pacino's lent his likeness to the game and he's hand-picked his sound-alike," confides Donald. "I'm not allowed to say who he is, but he used to be Pacino's chauffeur. We went through hundreds of auditions for the voice of Tony Montana, but this guy was head and shoulders above the rest."

So there you have it: expletives will be rendered with unerring accuracy, gunshots will ring out crisp and clean, and explosions will rumble with all the might your subwoofer can muster. A movie production demands movie-like sound production, and this has it. The rest of the game has a huge challenge in reaching the lofty standards of the *GTA* series it's so self-consciously trying to emulate, but you can be sure it's going to sound fantastic. **PCZ**



THE MAN WHO KNOWS



Second Life, hall of online oddity, **sexual philandery playpen** and new home of **PC ZONE** stalwart **Steve Hill**, this month witnessed the most important **online music event** of recorded virtual history – when sunglasses-wearing, good-cause championing and **potato-eating superband U2** took to the stage and played to a thrilled audience. Or perhaps they would have if the whole thing were not a cunning masquerade. In fact **Bono**, **The Edge** and **the other two** weren't actually controlling their virtual forms themselves – their virtual mannequins instead being forced into **thrilling rock poses** by a group of **unknowns** who had borrowed their likenesses and streamed a **bootleg U2 live album** over the interweb in the name of **roleplay**. And **charity** as well. Quite how much money the massive audience of ten Internet users raised for good causes is yet to be revealed, but **Sir Bob Geldof** is reported as being **"feckin' unconcerned"**.

An event equivalent to Robbie leaving Take That and the Midland Bank becoming HSBC and losing the famous red griffin has struck the world of gaming. **Ubisoft's** product-placing girl gaming group **The Frag Dolls** have split. Or, more accurately, the one that most social outcasts would like to kiss on the lips has gone all anti-corporate and set up her own rival group, **Versus**. Ex frag-pup **Siren** and her similarly *Gladiators*-themed friend **Vixen** have set up a virtual home at **www.weareversus.com** where they display various photos of themselves wearing sexy red gloves, standing next to rivers and minor B-roads waving fake swords at each other. Another proud step for womankind.

Meanwhile, **LucasArts** have given further evidence to the increasingly vocal group who believe they might still possess a trace of **a sense of humour**. Following an **E3 tech demo** that abused a carbonite block containing corporate mascot **Jar Jar Binks** by bending him in funny ways, the men from the valley have now created a **life-size carbonite Jar Jar** to stand in their entrance hall. A bitter reminder that crap, computer-generated characters can still prove to be solid foundations for growing **large piles of money**. Presumably.

"How much the massive audience of ten Internet users raised for charity is yet to be revealed"



BEYOND THE PERIMETER

Maelstrom provides the familiar sound of the world ending...

www.codemasters.co.uk/maelstrom | ETA: September

IF YOU'RE GOING to make a post-apocalyptic RTS, you might as well go the whole hog. Not content with a story of environmental collapse that attempts the semi-prophetic, *Maelstrom*, the next effort from the chaps who made *Perimeter*, then splits the Earth into two separate populations – the Remnants and the Ascension.

The first, the most traditional RTS faction, are a rag-tag bunch of downtroddens using near-future (to us) technology that's been slowly enhanced over the 50 tits-up years following the apocalypse.

The Ascension, meanwhile, are modelled on corporations; superior swine who see the apocalypse as a chance to rebuild the world to their liking. A liking that doesn't include them Remnants – and they use mechs and harvest DNA for cloning their troops. Corporations, environment – so far, so typical an allegory of human greed and sightlessness. But aliens are evil too – hence the Hai-Genti, who have come to Earth, assessed us as negligible, uncivilised obstacles, and decided to turn our planet into an ocean.

So what's going to set the game apart from other RTS games? The storyline was written by James Swallow, who's so good at sci-fi he's even written for *Dr Who* – and not that rubbish one where the girl's drawings came to life, either. But in an RTS game, even the most sophisticated storyline is just an excuse for a scrap – so what's new in the combat?

KDV Games are touting the terraforming capabilities of the factions. The Hai-Genti require water to build their bases, summoned from the sky, so will do their best to waterlog the playing field. Human forces can reply with lasers, which evaporate the flood, or by freezing it, making it useless to the alien installations. With water meteors and lasers deforming the environment to form and burn away lakes, it can feel like the earth-raising and valley-forming of *Populous* when all the *Maelstrom* sides get powered up to the max.

Maelstrom isn't going to rewrite the genre, but it looks like it's adding enough spectacle to make it definitely worth having a frisky look.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:



The man who turned table-top into RTS mayhem

JONATHAN DOWDESWELL - PRODUCER OF *WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR* - *DARK CRUSADE*

Last month we went all crazy about Games Workshop, and we thought we'd squeezed every drop of love out of those Nottingham-based lovelies. But what about strategy classic *Warhammer 40K: Dawn Of War*? Moving into its second expansion pack *Dark Crusade*, we gave Relic a kick to delve a little deeper...

So were the team all big Games Workshop fans before the development of *Dawn Of War* kicked off?

"A lot of us were huge Games Workshop fans before coming to the team, others didn't know much about GW before coming on board. But one thing's for certain - whether or not we were fans before we came onto the project, we're all definitely fans now."

What do you think is Games Workshop's appeal then?

"Several things, really. First, the universe has such a detailed back-story - people can literally lose themselves in the licence. Second, I think each of the *Warhammer 40K* races taps into a strong archetype that people can relate to. Finally, I think people really like the dark and heavy nature of the material. Most sci-fi is too clean, utopian and polished, and seems to filter out the darker aspects of life. *Warhammer 40K* amplifies the darker aspects of reality, making for a great backdrop for adventure."

How do you go about converting a turn-based table-top game into a fast-paced RTS?

"We drew more heavily on the fiction than the actual table-top game itself. Our feeling was that the table-top game was just an interpretation of the universe, and that we should let ourselves be guided more by the mythology. When we sat down to make the Space Marines, we read several Space Marine novels and all of the stories in the codices, and tried to capture how Space Marines would fight in real-time. I think most people loved our interpretation."

What proportion of *Dawn Of War* players do you think are established Games Workshop fans?

"We recently ran a small poll on our community site. The final tally showed that roughly half were already fans of the licence, and the other half were unfamiliar or only vaguely familiar with the universe..."

Which *Warhammer 40K* race has it been the most fun to put in the game and its expansion packs?

"This depends entirely on which team member you ask. I think most people would say that Necrons have been the most fun. They're a race of metal skeletons that want to devour your soul - how can they not be

fun? I've personally had a lot of fun working on Chaos. I'm not sure why, but I've always enjoyed working on them more than any other race."

So why should we be hyped for the *Dark Crusade* expansion pack?

"There's a lot for our fans to be excited about. We're bringing two new races to life, for a grand total of seven playable races, each with its own unique art, personality and military model. This is unprecedented for an RTS. We're also bringing a new type of single-player campaign that can be played from beginning to end by any of the seven races. We can't wait to see what our fans think."



"Who threw that?"



tat Zone

If it wasn't for charity, it'd be inexcusable...
It's our monthly off-fob of semi-desirable pish!

The money that's been 'resting' in our bank account is resting no more - £577.77 has been delivered in the form of a giant comedy cheque to the ESC gaming charity. But the quest for further tat-exchange goes on, and shall go on forever. And ever and ever. Every month we unearth piles of T-shirts that no-one in their right mind would ever want, and try and offload them on our unstable (yet lovely) readership. As always, we'll be on eBay under the tag of PCZoners. God bless us.

Buy our tat at www.ebay.co.uk
All proceeds go to charity, mate...
www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org



THIS MONTH'S TAT



BIOSHOCK T-SHIRT
We'll try not to get it removed from eBay this time.



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN TATTOOS
Won't stay forever. But you might say "Yarr!"



CHOP YOUR OWN HEAD OFF CD
Earache *Extreme Metal Racing* demo plus music.



THE LAW OF THE PLAYGROUND BOOK
First Edition, signed by the author. (Log)

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	HELLGATE: LONDON T-SHIRT Pilfered in the presence of Bill Roper himself, this has been invested in by the very spirit of <i>Diablo</i> . Hooray for Bill!	£21.00	12
	MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR MACE KEYRING Should help its lucky buyer to fight off miniature doorstep salesmen.	£16.00	7
	GARGANTUAN XL UT2007 T-SHIRT There's a big, big man somewhere who needs big, big clothing. Or a duvet.	£31.01	12
	THE TURDS GIANT POSTER Codemaster's free gaming poo poster is bought by a man from Leamington Spa. Which is suspiciously where Code Masters live too. Hmmm.	£6.01	6

THE PROFESSIONALS

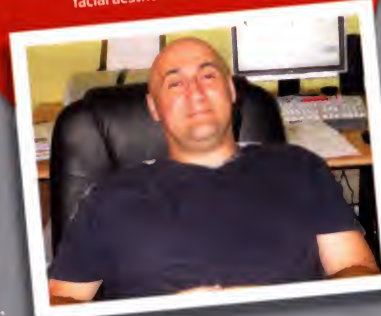
Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

SPEAKING AS A group of omnivores – except crazy Sefton, who's so vegetarian that he goes on Internet sex dates with a pot of hummus – we've got some great teeth going on, here at **ZONE**. Will's goofy ones are so shiny that the last thing his victims see is their own terrified face in his molars. Steve's

teeth, while not strong enough to bite through metal cables, can certainly get through those plastic tags you get in new clothes. But how do the teeth of our gaming heroes stand up to the scrutiny of a real, actual dentist? We asked Dr Guy Simmons, who's done a root canal and everything, we reckon.

THIS MONTH:
TEETH

Expert: Dr Guy Simmons BChD
Job: Dentist Expert pedantry: Teeth and facial aesthetics in PC gaming



ALYX FROM HALF-LIFE 2

"Alyx looks as if she has had some bad dental work done. I'd expect her teeth to get in the way of her lips and tongue when she tries to speak. She would talk as if she had a

mouth full of marbles, pretty much like Janet Street-Porter. On the other hand, her teeth seem quite clean for someone freedom fighting in the futuristic slums of Eastern Europe. Although, if she has had dental work done, porcelain (the most common tooth-coloured material used) doesn't stain except in the most fetid of mouths. Her face looks as if it's had a ton of Botox injected into it."

PCZONE



Ol' manky gob Vance



LARA CROFT

"There are so many features on this face that just gel! The lips have a naturally open pout when at rest (called 'incompetent lips') that many find attractive (à la Patsy Kensit, Debbie

Harry etc). Her teeth are nicely proportioned too. She also seems to have well-defined cheekbones and full lips. I won't mention the flawless skin (oops, just did). Now all this could be plastic surgery and cosmetic dentistry, but I doubt it. Nobody would spend a fortune improving their looks and then scramble around in the jungle."

PCZONE



Hubba hubba etc



OBLIVION WOMAN

"This woman has what is called a Class Three Jaw Relationship, which means that she has a profile like Jimmy Hill. This is made more obvious by the silicone she seems to have had injected into her lips. Whatever sun that is that shines above Cyrodiil, meanwhile, must have some strange radiation in its spectrum to wither her face but leave her neck unwrinkled. Her upper teeth are too narrow for a pleasing smile. However, as this lady has teeth that are at least functional, she gets three stars."

PCZONE



Chinny reckon



SAM AND MAX

"These teeth are very weird indeed. Poor old Max has one big blade-like tooth in each jaw, with bits missing – possibly from stopping too many bullets with them. These teeth are utterly useless for a rabbit's normal diet – lots of green stuff – which requires loads of chewing and grinding. They would be great if his diet consisted of rocks or huge chunks of meat. That smile of his is likely to be a grimace... Broken teeth can be very painful."

PCZONE



Once rabbitten...



DOOM 3 HEAD MONSTER

"Well, 'Heady' will be glad that he doesn't have a body to feed as his teeth are basically useless for that purpose. They would be good for holding prey, but the spaces in between the teeth would make it difficult for the ripping of flesh, and it would be tricky to hold onto the struggling prey with his low body mass. Even trans-dimensional head monsters need to feed and this one can't. If you ever come across one, just nip behind a crate or something and wait for the bugger to starve to death."

PCZONE



Nobody to go with

WINNER: Lara Croft

It's difficult to say whether Lara won the prize on the basis of her pristine tecs, or because Guy was driven into a state of blind arousal by the mum bumps. Five stars is five stars, though – Lara wins.

ARE YOU A PROFESSIONAL?

PC ZONE is in search of readers with professional knowledge or anally-retentive knowledge in the following fields, and many more:

*Spacial Anomalies *Portable Light Sources *Crates *Locksmithery
*Burglary *Psychological Manias *Dogs *Monkeys *Pest Control

If you want to cast your eye over these or any other PC gaming areas, then email us at TheProfessionals@pczone.co.uk and stick your oar in as far as it'll go.



PARABLE OF PAIN

Germanic explosions and Roman proverbs combine in *Parabellum*

www.aconygames.com | ETA: 2007

ACCORDING TO ONE PC ZONE

correspondent (the posh one), his posh Latin lessons led him to believe that most Roman conversations ran along the lines of "Ah Maurus! The troops of Caesar have been seen in a ditch, where they had been hiding." They also said, however, "Si vis pacem, para bellum" – meaning, "If you want peace, prepare for war."

From this, Imperial Germany's DWM weapons company created the Parabellum firearms cartridge – used in the famous Luger pistol. From this, a French rock group called themselves Parabellum. And from this, maybe, German FPS men Acony have harnessed the power of Unreal Engine 3 and poured it into fiery shooter *Parabellum*. A team-based multiplayer destruct-o-thon, it's another example of what the Romans did for us...



WHERE ALL THE COWBOYS WENT

Hands-on update from the *Call Of Juarez*

www.callofjuarez.com | ETA: September

INTEREST IN CHROME creators Techland Studios' cowboy shooter is running high, so further details from its Wild West wasteland shall be promptly offered.

We played a section that saw a breathless chase through a farmstead, with the player-controlled mad preacher chasing the other playable character Billy (who he suspects of murdering his extended family). Burning barns and townspeople looting the bodies of the deceased soon followed – highlighting the game's desire to tell a good story rather than throw gunplay in straight from the off. That said, within minutes of these events the townsfolk had

rebelled, the sheriff had been shot, and we were shooting cowboys in a variant of bullet-time and saving women from almost certain peril.

We won't lie – there's a lot of tidying to do in this game – a lack of clear directions, daft timed sections that end in instant game over and unskippable cut-scenes for a start. But, we hasten to add, there are cowboys in it. And Indians.

And probably sexy women leaning on saloon balconies winking at you as well. So there's still hope.



Dear Will Porter,

I've noticed recently you've been joyfully laughing and grinning while playing *SiN Episodes: Emergence*. I'm worried; have you been drinking? It's an archaic FPS experience, and its only redeeming features come from the Source engine that brings its large-breasted, shoddily animated characters to life.

Andy Robinson

Dear Andy,

I enjoy *SiN: Episodes* because of its simplicity. Is there something wrong with having a game in which the fun is in mindless shooting and flailing limbs? It reminds me of the glory days of *Soldier Of Fortune* – just good, daft, violent fun. Only now there are ragdolls as well – so it's even better!

Will Porter

Dear Will,

The rubbish AI, the eternally loading intro, the repainted *Half-Life* weapons, the 'please let me die' explosive barrel sequences... I hate it all. Admit it; it wasn't designed to be simple – you just like rubbish FPS games.

AR

Dear Andy,

Point one: the AI isn't that bad – a grunt ran through a door behind me once and shot me dead. Second off: I don't care about loading times as I have the rare gift of patience. Third off: the weapons aren't repainted from *Half-Life* at all and the shotgun is fundamentally excellent. Fourth off: the barrels of *SiN* are genuinely exciting to use – I haven't seen such good examples of barrel death in a long time. Fifth off: piss off. You shouldn't need to have a brain to enjoy a game.

WP

Dear Will,

Since we're doing points now, point one: I'm guessing the other grunts just stood around while you shot at them? Point two: I wouldn't have minded if I was waiting on something other than just polygonal tits.

AR

Dear Andy,

For the simple joy of blasting a man's head off at close range, *SiN: Episodes* delivers in bloody spades. Story, dialogue, environments: all iffy I concur – but even though it isn't Shakespeare, it never claimed it was going to be either.

WP

Dear Will

Good, at least you just half-admitted that it's rubbish. Now go and play *Deus Ex 2* or something, you big, rubbish FPS-loving pansy.

AR



DARK MESSIAH

HOT SHOTS

DEVELOPER Arcane Studios/Kuju **PUBLISHER** Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.mightandmagic.com/uk/darkmessiah/teaser **ETA** September

IT WAS SO artistic you could have nailed it to a wall and sold it to the Tate Modern – a press event in a 600-year-old crypt in Farringdon, packed with networked PCs all running *Dark Messiah Of Might & Magic* multiplayer. Old meets new, modern meets classic, silicon meets stone, a cauldron used to keep everyone's beers cool, it was beautiful. Almost as beautiful as the arcs of blood which would soon be flying around the room, albeit in magical network encoded zeroes and ones. So sit back, and let us regale you with some multiplayer tales from the crypt.

The Bigger Picture

1 FIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

You'll notice two distinct shades of blood spilling all over this medieval bridge. There are two factions in *Dark Messiah* multiplayer: zombies and humans. Over five maps, the two teams wage a tug-of-war battle, forcing the enemy back towards their home bases to eventually besiege them and win the game.

2 ARMCHAIR ARCHER

Archers are excellent attackers at long range, but are pretty useless up close. As you fight and achieve objectives, you level-up in the particular class you choose to play as, earning skill points along the way. This archer's been playing for a bit already and has used his skill points to earn fire arrows.

3 WARRIOR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FORRIOR?

Absolutely nothing will stop the warrior decapitating an unprotected enemy once he gets in close. At a distance however, he can't do much. Get two warriors and you get an irresistible force situation in which a fantastic sword duel dictates who comes out with one less head.

4 ASS ASS IN, ASS ASS OUT, AND BREATH

Assassins are the sneakiest of the character classes and have a surprisingly modern, stealthy look to them. They've got daggers, which they use to backstab other players who stand in the wrong place for too long. They can turn partially invisible too, although the priestess can spot and mark them out for her allies.

5 OH MY GOD DID YOU SEE THAT?

And this is what happens when it all kicks off. Warriors duelling with warriors, archers picking off mages, priestesses reviving allies, mages exploding assassins – it's madness and that control point flag doesn't know whether it's coming or going. Such a madcap menagerie of character classes makes for interesting gameplay.

6 THE POINT OF CONTROL

Without putting too fine a point on it, capturing control points and winning battles works exactly as it does in *Battlefield*. The more control points you own, the quicker you reduce the opposing team's score. Once it reaches zero, you win. Control points are also there to spawn from, thankfully.

7 THE PRIESTESS WITH THE LEASTEST

Not actually leastest, the priestess is a powerful lady who can cover the ground with thorns to impede enemy progress. She can also cure allies and resurrect them, although if she's killed, everybody she's resurrected also dies. A bit like killing the head vampire, only she's a priestess.

8 MAGE IN THE CAGE

The most popular of the classes, the mage is great at casting long-range offensive spells. Not that they shout 'F***!' or anything, they're just really powerful. Levelling him up gives you access to almost godlike abilities like firebombs and lightning bolts. He's useless in a fistfight though, obviously, being the nerd he is.





SMITH!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Will Porter gains entrance to the lair of Traveller's Tales and indicates that he's come for the bounty on this wookiee



Who are ya?

NAME Jonathan Smith

DEVELOPER Traveller's Tales/TT Games Publishing

POSITION

Development director

AGE 34

GAMES WORKED ON BEFORE

LEGO Star Wars, *Prisoner Of War* and *Operation Flashpoint*

FAVOURITE GAME

Counter-Strike

FIRST GAME WORKED ON

Hyper Sports



Q Do you get much feedback from the Lucas Ranch on *LEGO Star Wars*? What does the big man himself think?

A "All along, we've had terrific support and input from the teams at Lucasfilm and LucasArts. Everyone's always been incredibly kind and enthusiastic about this distinctive take on the world they live and work with – yes, all the way to the top!"

So what is it that makes *Star Wars* and LEGO work together so well?

"Oh, lots of reasons. The mythic strength of the essential *Star Wars* narrative is complemented by the creative unpredictability of LEGO. The LEGO building system is well suited to spacecraft, and the *Star Wars* vehicles make terrific models; just as the distinctiveness of the *Star Wars* characters makes them ideally suited to treatment in iconic form as mini-figures. It all just works."

Can you still cut off Threepio's legs in the second game? How did that come about in the first place?

"Of course you can – and his arms. A lot of those brilliant animation touches were originated and executed by our genius lead animator, and they were entirely of his own devising."

So how does *LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy* improve on its illustrious predecessor?

"Oh, I could answer this one all day. We very consciously set the bar high, right at the start. We were all really proud of the original game, and we knew that the only way to feel that proud again would be to produce – much more than a straightforward continuation of the *LEGO Star Wars* story. Instead, we wanted to create something that genuinely developed

the game experience in several different dimensions."

Give us a big old list then...

(Deep breath) "A bigger and deeper game all round; more LEGO, and more you can do with it; the ability to get in and out of vehicles like the AT-ST and landspeeder, or to ride creatures; new combat moves and special abilities, including the ability for characters to build with LEGO, Force Lightning, Force Confuse and Force Choke; new competitive bonus areas; the ability to take control of collected mini-kit vehicles; Free Play in space sections; score-multiplying bonus areas; loads of new cheats and extras; Gold Bricks and Power Bricks; thermal detonators for bounty hunters. Plus, of course, the ability to pull off your own head and throw it at an enemy (available for one special character only)."

Well obviously. In addition, how have you created a LEGO Jabba?

"We've based him on the original LEGO model – as a single sculpted element. He does look suitably gross."

And has a golden bikini ever been rendered in LEGO before?

"It's highly unlikely."

You guys are probably the first to have been allowed to genuinely mess around (in a good way) with an IP as jealously guarded as *Star Wars*. What makes you so special that they let you get away with it?

"Well, there are two main factors there. First, we gain so much from the freedom brought by LEGO. The creative people there have already done a lot of hard work for us, in terms of establishing the ground rules. And second, the credit has to go entirely to the team at Traveller's Tales. The many



What is it with *Star Wars* and decapitations?

"*Star Wars* characters are ideally suited to treatment in iconic form as mini-figures. It just works..."

years of experience they have in making great games, coupled with their innate love for LEGO and *Star Wars* enabled them to create the perfect early demo. They then followed that up with consistently brilliant work in every area."

Which original series *Star Wars* location has been the most fun to render in LEGO?

"We instantly started on the Death Star – and I think that remains a favourite location. It's just so much fun to contrast the seriousness of this dark Imperial enterprise with the jokey surprises you'd expect from a LEGO game."

Would you ever consider rendering another movie licence in LEGO? Like the *Indiana Jones* films perhaps?

"We've got plans for more LEGO games for the future – we hope you enjoy them too."

Lego Nazis. I hate these guys... **PCZ**



"It's a trap! A big LEGO trap!"

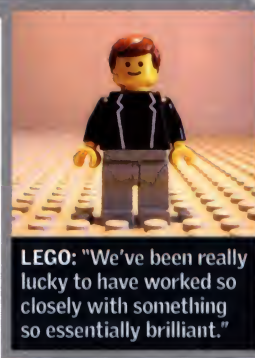


"That's funny, it looks all plastic from out here."



Incredibly, his acting outdoes even the real Billy Dee Williams.

JONATHAN SMITH Where he turns for inspiration...



LEGO: "We've been really lucky to have worked so closely with something so essentially brilliant."



FAMILY: "It's a pleasure to be able to take work home, to be able to play games with our kids."



GAMES: He's inspired by games. Specifically: "All kinds of games." Yes, even *Rise Of The Robots*.

**PCZONE
CHARTS****ChartTrack**

- 1 **NEW** PREY
Issue 171 86%
- 2 — RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR
Issue 170 80%
- 3 ↑ THE SIMS 2
Issue 147 82%
- 4 ↑ THE SIMS 2: OPEN FOR BUSINESS
Issue 166 72%
- 5 ↑ WORLD OF WARCRAFT
Issue 152 95%
- 6 ↓ CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2006
Issue 167 69%
- 7 ↓ HALF LIFE 2: EPISODE ONE
Issue 170 91%
- 8 **NEW** TITAN QUEST
Issue 170 81%
- 9 ↓ FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
Issue 162 90%
- 10 **RE** CIVILIZATION IV
Issue 162 92%
- 11 **RE** BATTLEFIELD 2: DELUXE EDITION
Issue 161 93%
- 12 **RE** X3: REUNION - GOTY EDITION
Issue 162 92%
- 13 ↑ LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH II
Issue 167 71%
- 14 **RE** THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE
Issue 161 58%
- 15 ↓ GUILD WARS: FACTIONS
Issue 169 78%
- 16 **NEW** INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2006
Issue 171 62%
- 17 **NEW** TOTAL WAR: ERAS
Issue 171 N/A
- 18 ↓ AGE OF EMPIRES III
Issue 162 84%
- 19 ↓ THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION
Issue 168 95%
- 20 **RE** THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY
Issue 153 57%

**1****PREY**

Tommy the Indian is big, um, chief of the charts this month. And if it's racist to say that, well *The Beano* said it first. Not us.

**5****WORLD OF WARCRAFT**

The glorious Horde give a kicking to the pathetic Alliance. And if it's racist to say that, well Orc leader Thrall said it first. Not us.

**2****RISE & FALL: CAW**

Now you too can watch the lazy Persians get their arses kicked. And if it's racist to say that, well Plutarch said it first. Not us.

**20****THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY**

Corn-fed, over-privileged American dullards feature heavily in this nauseating exposé of a culture of greed and ill-judged foreign policy.

LISTEN ALL Y'ALL IT'S A...

Sabotage. The game where Beastie Boys and World War II collide

www.replaystudios.de | ETA: Q4

YOU CAN COUNT the number of female leads on one hand, and if you count the ones that don't invite you to gawp at their mammaries, then you're down to a couple of undecided fingers. Violette Summers, the star of Replay Studios' WWII third-person shooter, may well be a trained killer, but she's no dominatrix fantasy figure – her inspiration was Violet Szabo, the first woman to receive the King George Cross and a genuine hero of the Resistance. So you can put those fingers away now, OK?

Szabo may have inspired Summers, but the developers are aware that a third-person stealth-shooter masquerading as a biography would be more than a little tasteless. Especially considering that in the gameplay we witnessed, Summers shot the face off a Virgin Mary statue, which is something Szabo would probably never have done.

This is pure fiction; the action takes place over a number of different missions, all told in flashback from a hospital bed. Within these flashbacks, and bear with us here, further flashbacks will

tell another story, of Violette's attempts to rescue the inhabitants of an invaded village. Although this provides a sense of narrative continuity across the individual missions, it's the flashback equivalent of dreaming about falling asleep, only backwards.

With its mixture of stealth kills and big shoot-outs, character development and authentic weaponry, *Sabotage* isn't bringing any great innovations to the WWII table. Still, we'll find out soon whether Replay Studios' personal blend of the action will be an enjoyable addition to the ongoing struggle against that bastard Hitler bloke.



Cathedrals: will get shot.



Ganging up on a lady: Nazis can be such meanies.



Bumpers: always the first to fall off.



More John Travolta than The A-Team.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Paraglide with the rich and famous in *Just Cause*

www.justcausegame.com | ETA: September

THE FIRST THING you realise when you boot up *Just Cause* is that it's huge – just vast. *San Andreas* is a paddling pool next to its 32sqkms of tumbling mountains and volcanic dens of prostitution. The second thing you realise is that, somewhat belying its clear console friendliness, *Just Cause* looks gorgeous on PC – from the lovely weather effects to the pixel-perfect clarity of its blue oceans.

The third thing you realise is: "Wow! My bloke was just hanging onto the wing of a

plane, before freefalling, opening his parachute, firing his grappling hook at a drug dealer's car, reeling himself in, kicking out the driver then driving the screaming druglord over a cliff. I died with him, but it doesn't matter! And my, *Just Cause* may not be very realistic, but it sure is fun!"

Just Cause is essentially a non-broken *Boiling Point* put through a slightly silly *Total Overdose* filter, and it does what it does extremely well. You're a CIA agent who's been trained to leap 20ft in the air

from the top of a moving car, and you've been inserted onto an archipelago of islands that are in dire need of a governmental reshuffle. During our hands-on, we found ourselves legging it around a town of Cuban appearance – helping the local guerrillas to slaughter government troops and reclaim the township. A righteous campaign for change certainly aided by the pilfering of a skyborne helicopter equipped with a rocket launcher.

True, the build we played on had extremely iffy vehicle controls, but for sheer daft freedom *Just Cause* certainly has the other contenders for *GTA Rip-off Of The Year* yapping at its paragliding heels. And the more respect you have with the local drug cartel, the closer you'll nudge to having your very own hard-won jetfighter parked outside your hideout. Drugs may damage lives and rip the heart out of our inner cities, but at least they grant you access to heavy-duty machinery.



"You didn't see me do it. Can't prove anything."

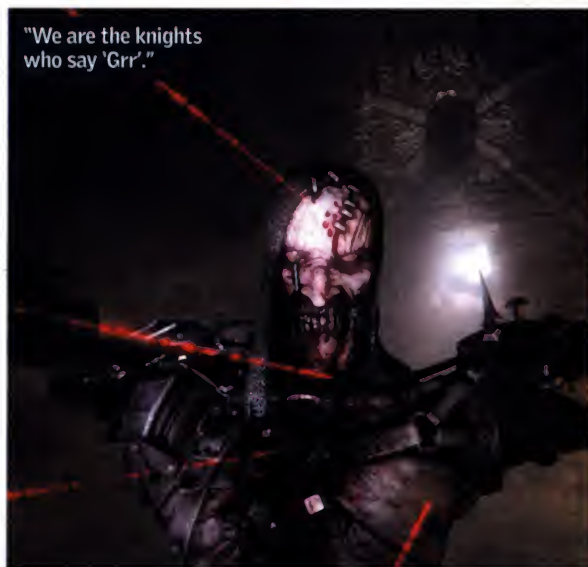
UNDYING LOVE

The wall of silence finally falls down around *Clive Barker's Jericho*

www.clivebarker.com | ETA: 2007

IF YOU HAVEN'T played *Clive Barker's Undying*, then you've missed out on a thinking man's fright-fest of brilliant proportions. A straw poll around the *ZONE* office reveals that some individuals didn't even finish it since they were such big gingham-wearing girls. Rejoice, then, that the horror maestro himself (he of *Hellraiser*, *Candyman* and innumerable best-selling novels) is making a return to horror gaming.

A lost city has suddenly reappeared in a remote desert, and yourself and the rest of a Special Forces squad are going in to tackle an evil from the dawn of time that's threatening to do horrible things to planet Earth. Good job you've been trained with a working knowledge of the *Necronomicon* – as well as high-octane combat then,...



"We are the knights who say 'Grr'."



"All together now! 'Mommamaa... Just killed a man'..."



BACK ON THE ROAD

Two years ago Sam and Max had their badges turned in. Today, *Will Porter* sheds a tear of joy as they report for duty once more...

ETA
Q3

DEVELOPER Telltale Games PUBLISHER Telltale Games WEBSITE www.telltalegames.com/samandmax PREVIOUSLY IN... 161

REMEMBER THIS? "LET'S leave this criminal cesspool pronto!" "Good idea, Sam. Maybe we can ditch the head somewhere while the credits are running. Mind if I drive?" "Not if you don't mind me clawing at the dash and shrieking like a cheerleader." "Sam, is 'pronto' a real word?"

They live again. With one single, solitary game under their belt (well, Sam's belt presumably since Max is always naked), Sam and Max remain PC gaming's fondest comedy pairing. Now, after two (yes, two – we only found out about the other one today) failed LucasArts projects, *Sam & Max* is back in the ascendancy. It's all thanks to the lovely team at Telltale – providers of already proficient (yet not world-setting-on-fire) episodic adventures with the cow race shenanigans of the lubbin-nosed Fone Bone.

So what should you expect when you boot up the first bout of episodic *Sam & Max*? Well, violence clearly. But what else? "Well, of course we need to start in Sam and Max's office," explains crime-fighting expert and *Sam & Max* creator Steve Purcell. "Then we'll get to know some of the new neighbours and have a case to solve that concerns pop idols gone bad..."

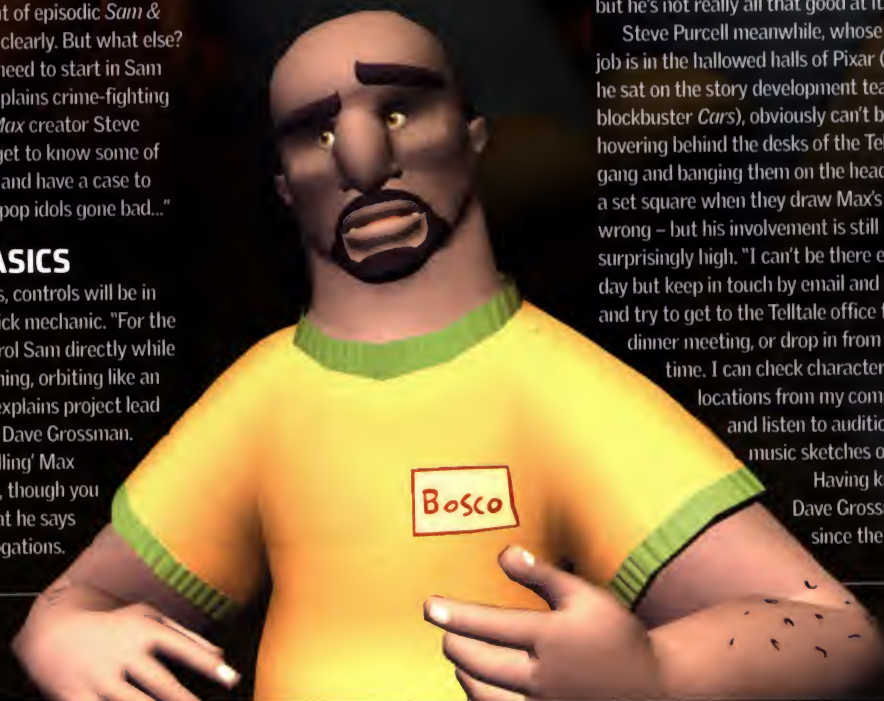
BACK TO BASICS

First things first: yes, controls will be in the old point-and-click mechanic. "For the most part, you control Sam directly while Max does his own thing, orbiting like an unstable satellite," explains project lead and senior designer Dave Grossman. "The idea of 'controlling' Max seems wrong to me, though you do get to direct what he says during some interrogations.

He also helps steer the car sometimes – but he's not really all that good at it."

Steve Purcell meanwhile, whose day job is in the hallowed halls of Pixar (where he sat on the story development team on blockbuster *Cars*), obviously can't be hovering behind the desks of the Telltale gang and banging them on the head with a set square when they draw Max's ears wrong – but his involvement is still surprisingly high. "I can't be there every day but keep in touch by email and phone, and try to get to the Telltale office for a dinner meeting, or drop in from time to time. I can check characters and locations from my computer and listen to auditions and music sketches online."

Having known Dave Grossman since the first



"We'll get to know some of the new neighbours and have a case to solve that concerns pop idols gone bad..."

Steve Purcell, creator, *Sam & Max*



Monkey Island, Purcell has every confidence in the developer's talents – while Telltale themselves love having his authoritative voice onboard. "I think it helps that our office is located in between his house and his job. We just string a net across the road in the evenings and rope him in as he goes by," smiles fellow San Franciscan Grossman.

APPLE PIE

Far from the national gallivanting that took place in *Hit The Road*, the events of this first season of *S&M* will mock Americana no further than a few miles from Sam and Max's office – with what Grossman describes as "American popular culture quite literally invading their neighbourhood". What's more, with their newly episodic form, local characters are liable to make



Partners in time

The appeal of dogs and rabbitry-things wasn't lost in medieval times either...



Deep in the countryside of Hereford and Worcester lies an ancient church in the village of Kilpeck. It's here that an astounding medieval carving sits on what is known in the architectural trade as a corbel. It isn't a hoax, and the photo hasn't been Photoshopped; this is actually an uncanny carving of what appears to be Sam and Max that was made around 1140. Weirded out by this, Steve Purcell has set his new series of *Sam & Max* webcomics (www.telltalegames.com/comics/samandmax) in this blessed plot. "I needed a graveyard so Sam and Max could rise again from their untimely demise," he explains, as he describes a tale that's heavy on royal neurosurgeon cockroaches. "The church and weird carving will figure into the story down the road..."

"The style of Sam and Max's banter grew out of me spoofing the comics of my eight-year-old brother"

Steve Purcell, creator, *Sam & Max*



PIXAR PERFECT

***Sam & Max* creator Steve Purcell speaks out on the ups and downs of owning a naked, violent rabbitry-thing**

Q So how did *Sam & Max* first come about?

A "*Sam & Max* grew out of the comics that my little brother Dave and I did as kids. He did a comic called *Sam & Max* about animal detectives. I would find his unfinished comics and complete them in a cruel parody of his style. Ultimately, I started doing my own Sam and Max stories which turned into an art school newspaper strip, the published comics and everything else. The style of Sam and Max's banter all grew out of me spoofing the comics of my eight-year-old brother."

How did it go from that to being such a staple part of the LucasArts canon then?

"The first *Sam & Max* comic came out shortly before I started working at LucasArts (then called Lucasfilm Games). The characters became unofficial mascots within the company. We had created animated versions of Sam and Max and an office room for the programmers to use as test material. Kelly Flock, the president of

Lucas at the time, thought it would be worth doing the game and for me it felt like the chance of a lifetime. The little cameos in other games continued as a tradition until I started working on the TV show, and then they stopped doing the cameos. I guess they thought I would sue them or something."

Which parts of *Hit The Road* are you most proud of? It could get pretty subversive at times...

"I like the carnival environment; Larry Ahern's Cone of Tragedy animation, the Tunnel of Love and Wak A Rat. I think the Carbomb mini-game is pretty subversive. Even at the time it was a bit dicey and I hear they weren't fond of it in some other countries. Nowadays it would probably be a firm no-go."

Moving on to more recent times, were you surprised when the axe fell on *Freelance Police*?

"It did take me by surprise. It felt like the production was cruising along with no

worries. Contrary to speculation, there were no problems with the game itself. It was purely a marketing decision."

What do you make of LucasArts these days? Is it a very different company to the one you once worked for?

"When I started there it was a handful of people in a couple of buildings out in the back of Skywalker Ranch. That sort of campus feel continued for years, but companies grow and change over time and have to pull their own weight. They seem to be in a period where they're trying to run leaner, which probably makes sense for them right now. I think Telltale has a very similar vibe to the old Stable House up at the Ranch in the '80s. They're trying out new ideas all the time and there's a lot of creative energy buzzing around over there."

After the axe fell, when did you first start to believe that a *Sam & Max* game might actually see the light of day again?

"I knew the Telltale guys were still interested in *Sam & Max*. They knew the characters really well by then but LucasArts still had the game rights. I took a little break from *Sam & Max* as the clock on my Lucas deal clicked down. When the rights came free, Telltale and I were able to chat."

What's your job over at Pixar? How do you balance your Pixar time and your *Sam & Max* time?

"I was on the *Cars* story team for four years and now I'm in story development on a new feature. My consultation on the game and other extra-curricular activities happen after my regular work day is done and the kids have gone to bed."

I reckon that if Pixar were to do a cinematic adaptation of *Danger Mouse*, then the world would be a better place. Could you please suggest it in a meeting or something?

"We could finally learn how he got his eye poked out! I'll get right on that."





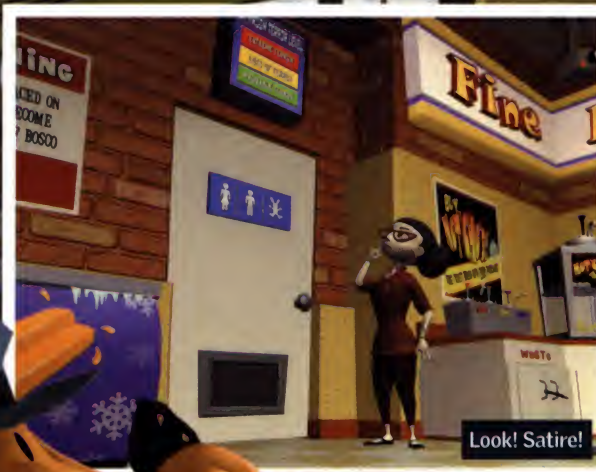
Sam and Max unseen

The gorgeous nuggets lost forever



In March 2004, marketplace realities saw the sword of Damocles fall and pierce the canine and lagomorph bonces of computer gaming's favourite crime-fighters. For a while it seemed that that all was lost – but what good stuff exactly was lost?

We already know of a rogue artificial intelligence made of tortilla chips, but when put under pressure Purcell can spill wonders even more bizarre. "There was this chapter that took place at the Burning Max festival with naked hippies roaming around with their crotches blurred out and pugel-stick fighting on the moving ears of the enormous wicker Max." Dave Grossman meanwhile, lead designer on episodic *Sam & Max*, didn't work on the mixed *Freelance Police* project, but did do time on what he calls "another, even more unfinished *Sam & Max 2* design with Steve after *Hit The Road* came out." And that game's highlight? "Well, there was a giant spaceship shaped like Max's head!" Sam and Max: we hardly knew ye...



many appearances as *Sam & Max* instalments tot up – a list currently spanning a slightly paranoid proprietor of the local inconvenience store; a young tattoo artist-turned-psychotherapist and a gang of rats that have made many appearances running around in the backgrounds of Purcell's comics.

Dialogue duties, meanwhile, have fallen squarely on the shoulders of Grossman and Brendan Ferguson – the latter a survivor of the bomb casually thrown out of a window by LucasArts and onto *Freelance Police*. Thus far, Grossman states that the best line is "Patience is a tough razor to swallow, little buddy" – and seeing as flowing patter is one thing that *Bone* does very well, lagomorph fans have little to fear in this department.

One fly in the ointment, though, is the fact that the voice actors of yore

haven't been invited back to the recording studio – with local Bay Area actors favoured instead. "We've been trying not to hang onto any preconceptions from the previous games or the TV show without good reason, and that includes the voices of Sam and Max," argues Grossman. "The original actors were perfectly good, but we've found some talented people who are also close enough that we can work with them repeatedly over the course of the *Sam & Max* season – hopefully, many seasons." A shame, but I suppose we should be grateful that the furry twosome are returning at all...

COMING SOON...

But what else will happen? Will kittens get their cartoon guts investigated by Max's fluffy mitt? Will Sam finally see more twine than he did that night in Tokyo in '68? What acts of extreme and inappropriate violence shall we, the paying public, be exposed to? Unfortunately, this is the point where Grossman becomes uncharacteristically silent. "I will say that Sam and Max get to hit several people over the head and drop someone out a window. But they all deserve it..." He says, winking. "More or less."

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

KANE

THE LOWDOWN

- Dark, adult and subversive ✓
- Homage to the gritty action of Michael Mann ✓
- Genuinely breathtaking crowd scenes ✓
- Actually will have co-op! On PC! ✓
- Not a professional approach to psychotherapy ✗

ETA
Q2
2007

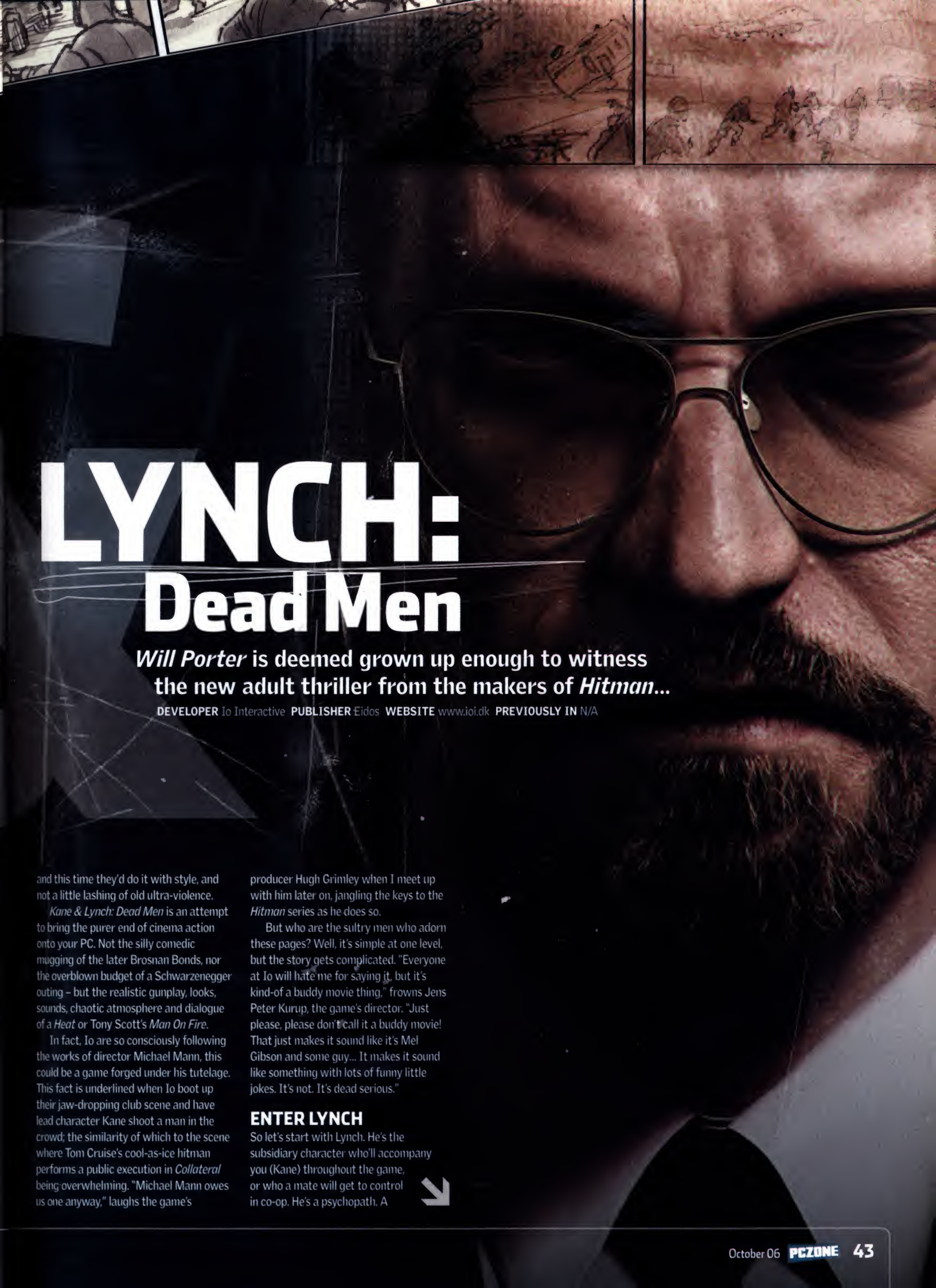
TWO AND A bit years ago, a game called *Freedom Fighters* was released and it didn't change the world. Lost in a monolithic EA release schedule and yet another in a long parade of third-person squad actioners, I reviewed it for *ZONE* and enjoyed it enough to give it 75%. And you'd have thought that would be case closed – but the game just would not leave my head.

As time went on I just began to remember it with abnormal fondness – to the extent that it has now become one third of my holy trinity of 'games you've probably never played, but should' list. It's a flawed game, but even now I rate it alongside *Beyond Good & Evil* and *Psychonauts*. Why? Why the attachment? Well, partly because it's a game that few played – and it didn't deserve that treatment – and partly because over-

riding the game's problems there were moments of pure gaming exhilaration. There was this barking Russian choral music, simple squad controls that had the game rattle along breathlessly and... Well, you just felt a lot of love had gone into the project. If you don't mind, we'll gloss over the shit AI and repetitive levels for now.

FOR FREEDOM!

As time passed since *Freedom Fighters* release, everyone apart from me seemed to forget about it. With the gaming nation distracted by the shiny bald pate of Io Interactive's more successful *Hitman* series, the third-person squad mechanics of *FF*'s plucky revolutionaries seemed to have been a one-off. A flop. An aberration. But deep in their Copenhagen lair, a group of developers apparently begged to differ. They were going to make a comeback



LYNCH: Dead Men

Will Porter is deemed grown up enough to witness the new adult thriller from the makers of *Hitman*...

DEVELOPER Io Interactive PUBLISHER Eidos WEBSITE www.ioi.dk PREVIOUSLY IN N/A

and this time they'd do it with style, and not a little lashing of old ultra-violence.

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men is an attempt to bring the purer end of cinema action onto your PC. Not the silly comedic mugging of the later Brosnan Bonds, nor the overblown budget of a Schwarzenegger outing – but the realistic gunplay, looks, sounds, chaotic atmosphere and dialogue of a *Heat* or Tony Scott's *Man On Fire*.

In fact, Io are so consciously following the works of director Michael Mann, this could be a game forged under his tutelage. This fact is underlined when Io boot up their jaw-dropping club scene and have lead character Kane shoot a man in the crowd; the similarity of which to the scene where Tom Cruise's cool-as-ice hitman performs a public execution in *Collateral* being overwhelming. "Michael Mann owes us one anyway," laughs the game's

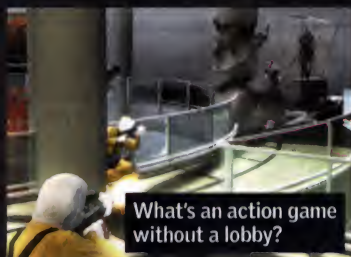
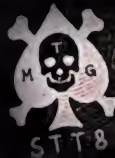
producer Hugh Grimley when I meet up with him later on, jangling the keys to the *Hitman* series as he does so.

But who are the sultry men who adorn these pages? Well, it's simple at one level, but the story gets complicated. "Everyone at Io will hate me for saying it, but it's kind-of a buddy movie thing," frowns Jens Peter Kurup, the game's director. "Just please, please don't call it a buddy movie! That just makes it sound like it's Mel Gibson and some guy... It makes it sound like something with lots of funny little jokes. It's not. It's dead serious."

ENTER LYNCH

So let's start with Lynch. He's the subsidiary character who'll accompany you (Kane) throughout the game, or who a mate will get to control in co-op. He's a psychopath. A





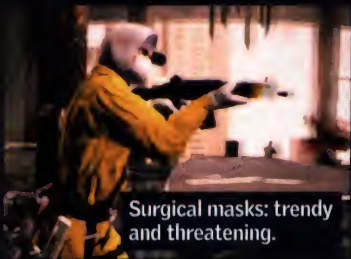
What's an action game without a lobby?



Many *Hitman* artists have been brought onto *K&L*.



Broken columns = the best.



Surgical masks: trendy and threatening.



Heat similarities abound.

Future echoes

Hitman: Blood Money held the clues...

SASSIN POLICE



Blood Money references Kane and Lynch – previously known as Marcus and 'Mr Little'.

Sheriff Calls Off Hunt For Escapees

by Red Bjarn

The two death-row inmates who escaped incarceration during a spectacular attack on a prison transport from Nevada State Prison to Elv Conservation Camp remain at large, but local authorities are calling off their manhunt.

"We've exhausted pretty much all our leads," says Redstone County Sheriff John McConico. "We've got to face the facts: these guys are gone, and it's just a waste of resources to keep looking for them at this point. I'm only speaking for local law enforcement, of course. The feds are still going after these guys very aggressively."

Notorious mercenary Adam Marcus and the psychopathic 'Mr Little' are both convicted murderers and were on their way to be executed when their transport was attacked in the bloodiest episode of street warfare in Nevada history. The episode triggered the largest manhunt ever conducted in the state. The County Sheriff's decision to drop out of the effort may have been influenced by the increasingly bullying tactics of federal investigators. [SHERIFF CALLS IT QUITS, p. 5]

If you have sharp eyes and easter egg-scented nostrils, you'll be able to find references to Kane and Lynch in the newspaper reports of *Hitman: Blood Money* – specifically that which follows the Casino level towards the end of the game. The names clearly have been changed as development has progressed (Lynch was called Seth in the build I saw – a clear reference to either the Old Testament or *Emmerdale*), but here they are, loud and proud escaping from a prison van in newsprint form. What's more, if you look hard enough there's a reference to *Freedom Fighters* in the suburban house level of *Blood Money* too.

proper, full-on medicated schizophrenic who distractedly hums at nothing in particular before embarking on murderous rampages through crowds of enemies and civilians alike. Let's get over it now: *Dead Men* is not a particularly accurate or knowledgeable account of mental health issues in modern-day society.

IT STARTED SO WELL...

Described by Io as looking like a "German teacher gone wrong", Lynch is not a happy cupcake. He once worked a day job in Detroit warehouses, but one day came home to find his wife brutally murdered – and seeing as his schizophrenia has had him blacking out and committing unspeakable acts of brutality, he's not altogether convinced that he didn't have a part in it. Conviction and death row beckons, and we'll leave him looking rather sad in a prison transport vehicle – sitting alongside the man he'll be baiting throughout the exciting plot arc that follows.

"Kane is a little bit more complex," explains JP Kurup. "He starts out as a normal father of two: he has a daughter, a son and a wife – life is generally good. He works as a consultant for large companies who outsource work in other countries; Venezuela in this case." So our lead character is a talented man, although presumably not doing the sort of outsourcing that puts our energy supplier

queries into the hands of a Bangladeshi lady with a working knowledge of *EastEnders*. Tragedy, however, isn't far away: his two-year-old son finds his gun and shoots himself, dying two weeks later. Kane can't cope and skips the country.

Two years later and he's a mercenary – using his negotiation skills and brute force to bring home the bacon to an empty house – presumably with a hammock, as that's what mercenaries generally sleep in. Four years later and he's contacted by a shadowy group known as 'The Seven' who are interested in becoming 'The Eight'. If Kane joins them, which he obviously does, then he gets the moon on a stick and the sun on a flagpole – but if he ever breaks their rules, then he's all kinds of bugged.

"It's a brotherhood of unlimited power, but you've got to behave," explains Kurup. "He's with them for about 13 years and everything is fine – they're working on their last big job, their retirement job in the US, but it all goes horribly wrong. Kane, however, manages to survive and get away with all the loot. He gets to Venezuela, but is caught, brought back and sentenced for the atrocities he's committed and is sent to death row." One Kane? One Lynch? Sitting together in an armoured car? That makes it bust-out o'clock, don't you think?

Let's leave them there for the moment though; I don't want to shovel too much back history down your throat. And, coincidentally, neither do Io – which is why so much of the narrative will be told through the conversations you have as the game progresses or, cleverly, in brief aural flashbacks of Kane's son dying or past conversations on the occasions that your ineptitude will have him near-dead.

LOOKS FAMILIAR

The action that will have left him in this position, meanwhile, is very, very similar to what went before in *Freedom Fighters*. So similar, in fact, that a keen eye could spot that they'd even borrowed its squad command icons for the purposes of the demonstration put in front of me.

Essentially, members of your crew can be distributed into strategic points through right-clicks of the mouse, and each will mimic your own tactics – so if you're attacking then they'll surge forward, if you're taking cover then they'll do the same. The aim is to rob squad-shootery of its complexities and drown it in fast-flowing simplicity – action being viewed from a third-person perspective which can be drawn into an over-the-shoulder viewpoint should a sharp shot be required.

All of the guys you're ordering about, one of whom will always be the psychopathic Lynch, are in it for

Jim sorry

THE STORY SO FAR... IO INTERACTIVE

Io-Interactive

Moon of Jupiter
A Danish TV company and a small-fry developer merge to form Io. The world prepares itself.

1998

Welcome baldie
Agent 47, a violent version of Mr Benn, hits PC. No shopkeeper though.

2000

Freedom forever
Freedom Fighters hits retail and imprints its image onto Will's brain.

2003

Blood? "I'll get it!"
Hitman: Blood Money makes us giggle with its silly violence and excessive bodycount.

2006



You're a mentalist!

Lynch is armed and dangerous...

Lynch, left, is mad and therefore bad. And dangerous to know.



While convenient amnesia has been the toast of brain dysfunction in gaming throughout all recorded history, schizophrenia has rarely got a look in – so thankfully, to help us all understand the intricacies of mental illness that much better, Lynch is on hand to repeatedly shoot dead bodies while screaming. Thank you Io! Whenever Lynch gets into one of his funny moods, you can go over and slap him until he's back in the real world, but as long as you don't mind a bit of recklessness and an increasing bodycount that includes hapless bystanders, then his insanity can become quite an asset. Other members of your crew, however, might beg to differ – what with him holding a rocket launcher and all...

One Kane? One Lynch? Sitting together in an armoured car? I'd say that makes it bust-out o'clock

themselves and won't necessarily risk their neck for you – but there will be quite a few of them. Generally, you'll have four or five guys to order about, but in later stages of the game each of them will be able to have four or five 'satellite' hoodlums following their moves. This means you'll be heading up attack forces of more than 25 characters; which is less third-person action and more all-out war.

PRODUCTIVE DAY

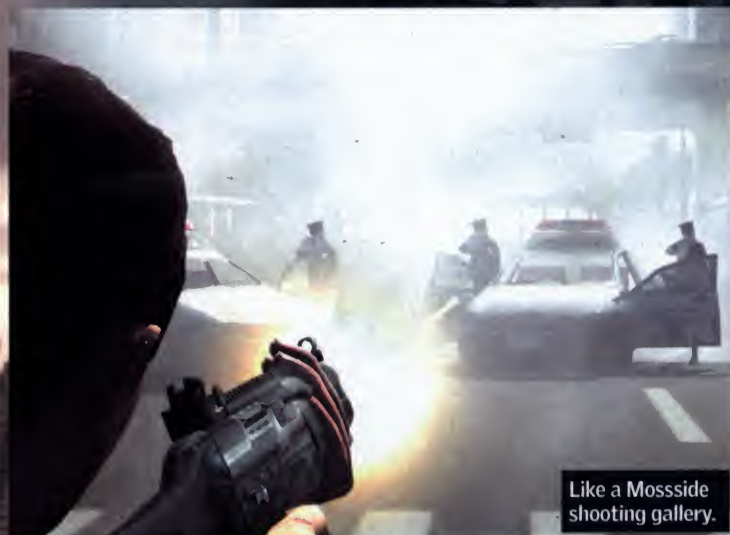
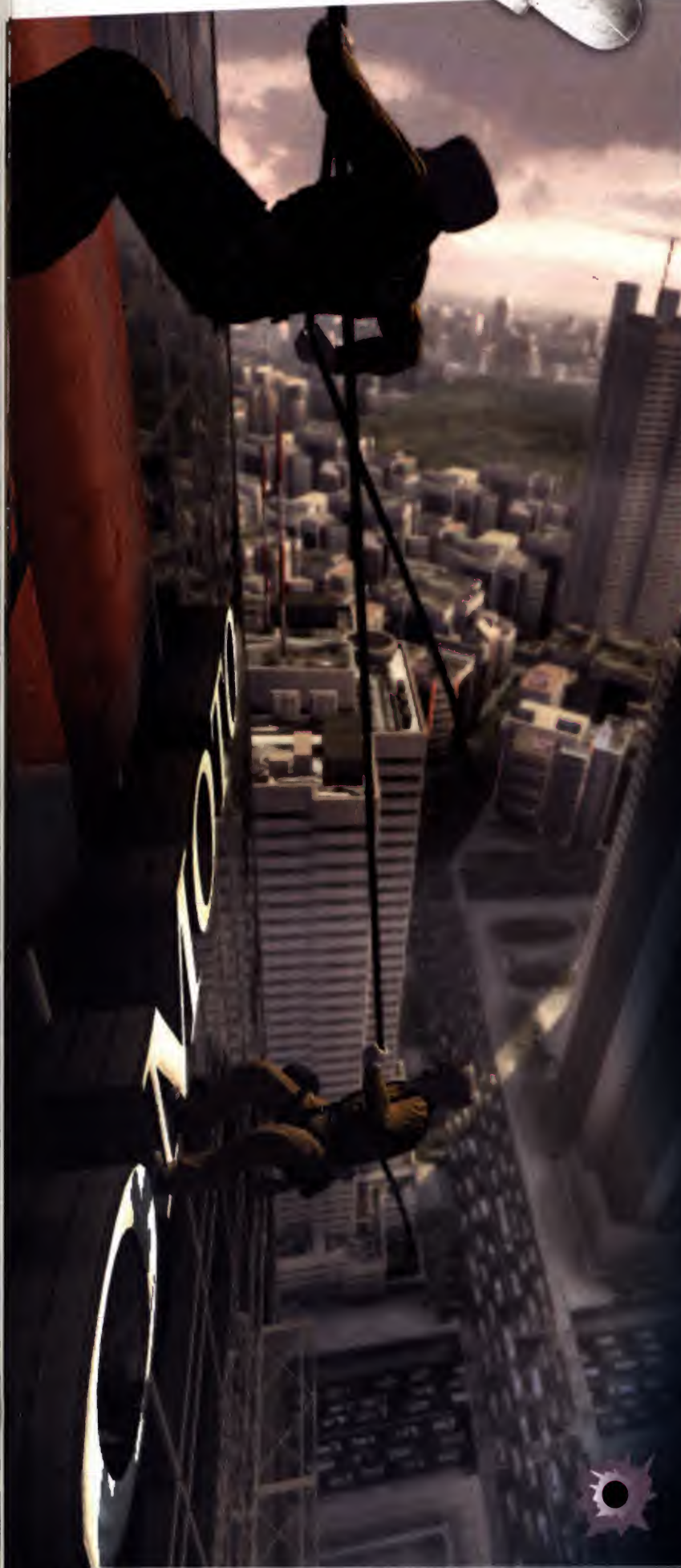
A typical chapter to describe, meanwhile, are the periods of calm and chaos you'll experience as Kane, Lynch and two other members of their 'crew' descend through a Tokyo skyscraper, pausing only to massacre a group of businessmen in a meeting, steal a briefcase and for Kane to give a dead foe a scar on his cheek to match his own. Seeing the four guys rappelling down from the roof with the blue open sky above, tiny cars below and office workers busying themselves at their desks (some noticing the action outside, others not) through the glass is a true sight to behold.

As soon as an explosive charge has been set outside the meeting room's window and the music starts pumping, however, you won't have time for 'oohs' and 'aahs'. The combat that follows is also notably grenade-heavy, especially since Io are also introducing smoke bombs and tear gas – the wafting of which we're promised will be far prettier on a PC than in the simultaneous release on our bastard cousin the 360.

The action then progresses through the Japanese skyscraper's lobby, with our anti-heroes cowering behind samurai works of art as they're slowly pummelled into pieces by enemy bullets, before spilling out onto the street. It's here that the influence of Michael Mann becomes most apparent, the scene instantly recalling the intense street battle that follows *Heat's* bungled bank robbery. Huge crowds scatter, cars screech and cops open fire – the action is just pure grit, and liable to get grittier with other set-pieces due to cover actual bank

This time they're not fighting for some goody-two-shoes concept like freedom.





Like a Moss-side shooting gallery.



Mercenaries need moments of quiet too.



Crazy camera angles! Wow!

robberies and breaking other characters out of jail. Bundled with, surprise of all surprises, a co-op mode that will actually see the light of day on PC and a multiplayer mode. To believe is so revolutionary, they're not going to show it off for a very long time for fear of other developers cribbing off them, and this is set to be quite the action package.

SHALL I GO ON?

But why are two men who hate each other so dearly going on such an extravagant global killing spree? Let's return to the set-up of the piece. I believe we left the pair together in a prison transit van, tasked with delivering them to their doom. Well, the next thing that happens is that Lynch tells Kane to cover his head; he does so, there's an almighty crash and then his already screwed up life gets even screwier. He also breaks his nose, which presents him with the rather fetching plaster-cast he has in all the screenshots.

"We then have a fairly grand-scale bust-out scenario where a group of armed mercenaries herd you through the location," explains JP Kurup, as he describes what at first seems to be a rescue attempt but is in fact a high-profile kidnapping. "Later, you meet the guys who busted you out – four members of The Seven. They survived and have come back to the US, and quite rightfully they blame Kane for being a traitor: he left them in Venezuela to burn and he got away with all the loot."

Kurup continues: "That's the main theme of the game: is Kane a traitor or not? The Seven want to kill Kane and his family, but the problem is they really need this loot. So they bend their rules ever so slightly; if Kane brings them the stash then they'll still kill him, but they won't kill his family. Kane accepts the deal and Lynch has been given a phone and instructions – he's there as a watchdog. He'll be with him throughout the game – just to make sure he doesn't go off and do something crazy."

BUMP AND GRIND

As if to underline this, I'm suddenly presented with the 'Collateral' club scene – and Kane and Lynch are making their way past the bouncers and trading unsuitably hateful repartee. Lynch is bitching, at this stage becoming increasingly batty without his medication, and Kane is responding with one-liners like: "Don't answer back to me you arrogant f***." Dialogue like this takes place throughout the game, and when you're tired of it – just like in real life – you can just walk away and Lynch will shut up and stare at you with unbridled vitriol. In this case, Kane turns a corner and the dancefloor comes into view – and sweet mother of the baby Jesus, it's incredible.

As far as I am concerned, you can't have a convincing action scene in a realistic urban setting without hordes of screaming innocent people. And you can't have a club scene which contains

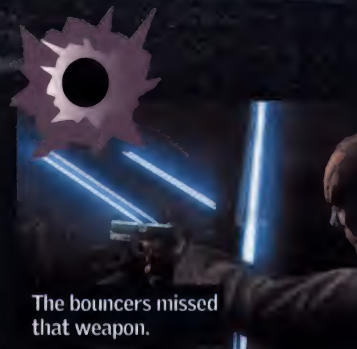
It's a trend!

When novel ideas come around they don't come alone...



Assassin's Creed boasts snazzy crowd tech too.

Games go in cycles. When technology allows, a developer will come up with a great idea, but then another developer on the other side of the planet will have his technology do exactly the same thing. It's weird really – no-one is copying from each other, but the technology has just nudged different people in the same directions. When I first started in the games industry it was all jungle combat, physics and ragdolls – and now *Dead Men* has some of the new breed of directions on show. First and foremost are crowds of NPCs becoming a part of active gameplay – as also shown in Ubisoft's forthcoming medieval romp *Assassin's Creed*. What's more, co-op play through the 'buddy-movie' set-up is also due to become more prevalent, as seen in the PS3-destined *Army Of Two*. I am mystic and paranormal: believe what I say.



two NPCs wobbling beneath a mirror ball. When you do a club scene, you need anything up to 800 or 1,000 beautifully rendered clubbers gyrating to hard, gritty music. It honestly looks like the scene from *The Matrix Revolutions* where the people of Zion discover they're all about to die and respond by having a massive sweaty slow-motion dance orgy. When you walk through them, they slow your progress – and when you start firing bullets into the crowd, then those in the 5ft radius around you who can hear the gunshot will start panicking, and the panic will gradually spread to all those present.

The technology already impressive in the Mardi Gras level of *Hitman: Blood Money* has truly come of age – compare this to when you jumped up and down next to two oddly animated Hong Kong clubbers surrounded by mirrors in *Deus Ex* and you realise just how far we've come in a very short amount of time.

The dastardly duo are here to see Yoko, the club's manager and old associate of Kane – but you're not here

for smalltalk – you're here to smack her, tie her up and kidnap her. Lynch then carries her out and it's up to you, with limited ammo, to take out all the security men and bouncers and ramp up so much panic that a forlorn struggling Japanese lady being thrown around by a bearded madman is lost in the chaos.

END OF THE LINE

And so, as the end of the page draws near, perhaps we should leave them to their own wicked devices: a mercenary traitor with everything to lose and an unhinged psychopath with everything to win – essentially some sort of evil middle-aged mirror-image of Ant and Dec. "They're not good guys in any conceivable way," underlines JP Kurup. "What they're doing is wrong, any means they take are never appropriate – but they do it anyway."

They say dead men tell no tales, or at least *Pirates Of The Caribbean* did, but this pair are about to tell an extremely good one. Just don't tell Michael Mann's lawyers – it'll be our little secret. **PCZ**

"They're not good guys in any way. What they're doing is wrong, any means they take are never appropriate – but they do it anyway."

Jens Peter Kurup, director, *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*





COMPANY^{of} HEROES

COMMAND THE COMPANY THAT
CHANGED THE FACE OF HISTORY

IN STORES SEPTEMBER



Command and
Win with Intel®
Technology.



Games for Windows





"Shit Dave, they've got Freeze Rays. No-one said anything about Freeze Rays."

Don't ignore the leaves. They put a lot of effort into those.

THE CHILL OF THE HUNT...

CRYSIS

Steve Hogarty investigates a world united by *Crysis*

DEVELOPER Crytek PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE www.crytek.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 169

THE LOWDOWN

Again, best-looking game ever	✓
Supersized, epic enemies	✓
Genius take on multiplayer traditions	✓
Freeze-tanks!	✓
Suit abilities seamlessly lend themselves to multiplayer game	✓
Are they really going to be able to balance this?	✗

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Q2
2007

FULLY REALISED JUNGLE environments, a physics system which allows you to break individual trees and completely demolish buildings, a suit which you can adapt and tailor depending on your situation, a legion of robotic alien foes ranging from massive spider-like Hunters with freeze guns and stomping-action to swarms of flying squid-like mechs that hunt in formation. These are just a handful of reasons we reckon *Crysis* will not only push the FPS envelope, but really humiliate it in front of its envelope friends. They're features we've already reported in our world-exclusive reveal back in March, but they haven't become any less impressive in the meantime.

But what of the game's lesser-known online contingent? We're aware of our worrying habit of looking at *Far Cry*'s few less-than-great points before comparing the game to Crytek's prodigious new title, but after a recent chat regarding their plans for the online aspect of *Crysis*, the multiplayer efforts of Crytek's previous

opus just seem to pale in comparison. So again, we begin by posing the slightly unfair question to the German developers: where did *Far Cry* multiplayer go wrong?

"Technically, we didn't really have the sort of staff that we needed to get *Far Cry*'s multiplayer to a state that was going to be as successful as it could have been," says Chris Auty, lead level designer at Crytek. "But with *Crysis* multiplayer, we have a much bigger team for the multiplayer side of things."


"We spent more time on the single-player, which obviously showed," claims Jack Mamais, producer of *Crysis*, "but this time we've developed our Net code from the ground up. We're hoping to make *Crysis* multiplayer as good as the single-player, if not better."

LET'S GET TOGETHER

That's a bold claim if *Crysis*' single-player ends up being even half as

impressive as it sounds. How on earth do Crytek hope to make the multiplayer every bit as good as the single-player then? The statistics seem sound enough: 32 players, America versus North Korea, four game modes (Tactical Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Tactical CTF and a new mode called Power Struggle), six to eight maps at launch and clever enough Net code to allow for the online destruction of jungles... But do they honestly think they can make people want to click the second button in the main menu just as much as they'll undoubtedly want to click the first?

"When we were designing *Crysis*, one of our key focuses was on the ability of the player to modify his suit, his weapons and his gameplay experience," explains Mamais. "We set the multiplayer basically as an epilogue to the single-player. Instead of making it a pocket universe which has nothing to do with the rest of the game, we're



From the forthcoming ITV sitcom, *Me And My Tank*.

"Ow! My armour!"

"When we were designing *Crysis*, one of our key focuses was the ability of the player to modify his suit, his weapons and his gameplay experience"

Jack Mamais, producer, *Crysis*

trying to tie it into the events of the single-player game."

HOME ECONOMICS

"Our multiplayer mimics the single-player in that objectives pop up that you'll be guided to," Mamais continues. "It'll be suggested to you to capture a vehicle factory, for instance. We want to have the same feeling in multiplayer as you get in single-player, that you're accomplishing things, goals are being done and that you're succeeding, rather than just this endless loop which we're tired of."

So what are these game modes? (To be honest, I'm just posing the question as a literary





This machine's new to Fitness First – just bring your arms together.



Cylinders on backs = potentially amusing death.



Tanks, like dogs, can't look up.



device, I already know the answer.) Deathmatch and CTF should be obvious enough – those are 'killing everybody' and 'running around with a flag' respectively – but the Power Struggle mode is what will make *Crysis* breach the canopy of online shooters. It's all about economics, you see. "The economy model came about because we had the feeling that multiplayer gaming was kind of empty," states Mamais. "If you killed people you didn't get anything – there was no reward. Chris Auty was one of the early designers on *Counter-Strike*, and we always liked the *Counter-Strike* buying model. What we didn't like was that it ended – two rounds were over and you had your AWP or your twin pistols, there was no further to go. So we thought, why don't we just let it keep going? What if the player could buy weapons, modifications, suits, tanks, airplanes – what if those airplanes could have different weapons depending

"We've added a balancing mechanic – the rank of the person you just killed will affect the points you get"

Chris Auty, lead level designer, *Crysis*

THE BIRTH

Crytek is born in Germany to proud parents Cevat, Avni and Faruk Yerli.

1999

CRY ME A RIVER

For Cry emerges, Hawaiian shirt sales rise by a couple of thousand per cent.

2004



CRYSIS MEETING

Crysis should be arriving in early 2007, which isn't as far away as it sounds...

2007

LONDON OLYMPICS

We make the best athletes in the world run around a building site, probably.



2012



on your money? So we decided to attach points to everything the player does and let them spend those points how they want to."

That said, something like this could only be done in a game with massive, open environments, which is why there's only one foreseeable problem with letting the best players buy the best equipment – balance.

It's not something Crytek aren't aware of. "We've added a balancing mechanic to the game," explains Auty, sensing my concern. "Depending on the rank of the person you just killed, it will have an affect on how many points you'll get. If you're a General and you kill a Private, you're going to get fewer points than you would get if you were a Private killing a General."

Mamais interjects with an example: "We're still working on it but let's say you get 500 points, you'd become a Corporal and you're then worth twice as much to the enemy. Conversely, a newbie is then worth half as much to

you. Now you're encouraged to fight on your own level, because you'd be risking yourself and your team if you present yourself as a target to a lower enemy."

BEST MADE PLANS

It's a plan that looks fine on glossy magazine paper, but it's something we'll have to see in action before we draw our conclusions as to whether or not such a balancing mechanic would actually work in practice. The idea of having to purchase everything is solid though, from special ammunition which can spray crazy purple knockout gas or track enemies, to the very suit that's modelled so gracefully on our front cover.

"You'll start off at the beginning of the game as a North Korean or American soldier with a very rudimentary form of exo-armour," explains Mamais. "This will give you a small armour boost. There are actually two versions of the suit; the prototype version that has some basic abilities like



Shoots you, sir.

Anatomy of an alien

Crikey! This one's a beauty!



Human soils self in stupid defiant gesture.

The single-player will host several different types of alien foes, the most common being the bog-standard flying Trooper. The Hunter is the big lad, coming in three flavours – Freeze Hunter, Mo-ac Hunter and Singularity Hunter, each commanding one of the three alien super-weapons. Hunters carry Troopers and Scouts into battle, and can't fly (unless being carried by the Scouts). And as for the aliens themselves?

"We're not going to give away the aliens' form right now," states producer Jack Mamais. "What I can say is that they don't look like you would expect them to. They come from a zero-G environment, so they can't function well on our planet. That's why they wear what they call exo-suits. The Troopers are robotic units which the aliens deploy, but there's no alien inside the Trooper. There are aliens inside Scouts and Hunters though, and we have another, larger version which we haven't revealed yet, which has an alien in too."

a little more armour and a little more strength, and the production model which we see in the single-player game – that's the full nano-suit. That's very expensive and gives you cloaking, speed and strength – basically it gives you everything, but it'll cost probably as much as a tank."

Not knowing exactly how much a tank costs, all I can do is feign an expression of mild shock. Presumably the suit will be one of the harder weapons to get your hands on, especially considering its powers in both single- and multiplayer. The suit's energy





Class system

Pick 'n' mix tricks

From this height, they look like massive ants.



Crysis is doing away with the standard design of allowing the player to choose from a list of classes, instead offering even more character customisation in every aspect of multiplayer. "We don't have classes in the usual sense of the word," explains lead level designer Chris Auty. "What we have are classes that players can customise with certain combinations of equipment packs. You can buy major and minor equipment packs and combine them in different ways to achieve the desired result."

"You could make yourself a sniper engineer if you wanted to, or a sniper medic," adds producer Jack Mamais, by way of example.

"That's the starter horn! Gentlemen, to your tanks!"

He's tasted Crunchy Nut Corn Flakes, and now he wants more.



can be routed to either stealth, strength or speed at any time, offering Predator-like invisibility, Hulk-like strength or Billy Whizz-like speed respectively.

There are two more pillars in this Acropolis-style monument however, the first of which is the inclusion of strategic buildings. Dotted around each map are factories, bases and airfields which can be captured by standing in a specific room inside each one for a pre-determined amount of time, very much like control points in *Battlefield 2*. The importance of these buildings comes in the fact that, by controlling them, they enable you to build certain things.

Capture a heavy vehicle factory and you can build tanks, for instance. Capture an airbase and you can build attack helicopters and VTOL jets. If you control the map's assets, you control the flow of production, and ultimately you will win the game. There's a tinge of the real-time strategy game on this side of *Crysis*' palette, and it all comes back to economics.

ALIEN CONCEPTS

The final aspect of multiplayer is easily the most exciting however, and one which you may have already guessed at – aliens. The remains of alien technology

rather, seeing as the multiplayer setting serves the single-player's epilogue.

"The alien weapons come in three base forms," explains Mamais. "There's what we call a Molecular Accelerator, which is basically a gun which shoots ice flechettes with no ammo needed – it just charges off precipitation in the air; a Molecular Arrester which is a freeze gun which, if you hold it down long enough, can freeze things to the point that they shatter instantly; and a Singularity Cannon which is basically an alien tactical nuclear bomb.

"On each map there'll be one to five randomised alien crash sites," continues



Right in the barrels!



Mamais, warming to his subject (and perhaps inadvertently hinting at the game's ending). "You take a tool from your base called the stabiliser, bring it out to the field, recover the alien core from the crash site and take it back to whatever you want to upgrade. If you can bring that alien core back to a strategic building, say a heavy vehicle factory, you can produce tanks which have alien weapons. You can produce a tank that has the freeze gun, for instance – a freeze tank. Or create a tank which cloaks."

Rounding off a multiplayer package which seems to be careering towards the sort of gameplay which allows fantastic player-defined set-pieces, Auty goes on to explain how Crytek are striving to keep everything just as destructible as it is in single-player. The age-old conundrum will finally be answered: if a tree falls in the jungle, and there are 32 players mindlessly slaughtering one another around it, can the server send out accurate physics information across a limited bandwidth without affecting the ping?

"Yes," smiles Auty knowingly. "One of the key destructible things in multiplayer will be the foliage, which really hasn't been seen before. You'll be able to blow down parts of the forest like in *Predator*. Obviously there'll be other destructible stuff; the vehicles will be destructible too." That's two *Predator* references now, which can't be bad.

"The vehicles have component damage," adds Mamais. "For instance, a helicopter would have a fuel tank, weapon pod, front rotor, back rotor and a cockpit. You can take a hit to the back rotor and the helicopter will lose control, but it won't blow up – in fact, it's pretty hard to blow a vehicle up unless you hit it in the fuel tank or it crashes. We want to have crashes that the pilot can walk away from, so you could hard-land a chopper, get up and walk away from it."

BEST SERVED CHILLED

Imagine what beautiful form the culmination of all these multiplayer features could take. You kill a few

All the small things

Crytek told me lots of bitty things. Here are some of them

"You love that gun more than you love me..."



When you shoot a frozen enemy, he will shatter completely – you can't dismember them (probably because Crytek would like their game to be sold in their native Germany). There will be at least one deathmatch map and maybe one CTF map in zero gravity. Every weapon will be upgradeable in some way, each with different attachments slots as shown; you can make useless things if you want, like a sniper scope on a pistol. There will be four types of boat, one of which is a hovercraft. Medics can heal people for points. Night vision and infra-red will feature in multiplayer, as well as 'cold cloaking'. Multiple people can enter a vehicle.

The powerful editor will be included, in which you could theoretically build an entire campaign. Squad-mates who die affect the story slightly. You can wander around your home-base (an aircraft carrier) after missions. The game is set over five days. Expect to play for ten hours. And Troopers act smarter when around superior aliens. Phew.

"Recover the alien core from alien crash sites and you can produce tanks which have alien weapons"

Jack Mamais, producer, *Crysis*

enemies, you earn a few points. You capture a tank factory, you upgrade it with an alien reactor. You buy a tank with a freeze gun on the top, you start spewing ice-cold jets of frozen death at a sky full of enemy aircraft.

Now imagine this: you're flying your newly bought helicopter above hostile territory when a stream of icy doom splits the sky in front of you, running along your rotor blades and leaving your chopper in a right cold mess. You begin to spiral towards the jungle, struggling to keep your vehicle steady. You smash through the trees, ploughing through a good 30 metres of arboreal foliage, and

maybe one or two team-mates too, before coming to a stop, hopping out and sprinting into the undergrowth. In that situation, everybody has fun.

As Chris Auty puts it: "We want to give the player the situations that they want to have in the game, and play it like they want to play it." It just so happens that the way we want to play it involves mounting massive alien weapons on the sides of VTOL jets and tanks, completely levelling entire sections of jungle in the process. The way *Crysis* multiplayer is shaping up, that freedom may very well be served to us on an ice-cold platter. **PC**

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PCZONE

REVIEWS

Our verdict on the latest PC games

If only...

I'VE JUST HAD a chance to clap my eyes on Valve's stunning new *Portal* movie and beyond the fact that it looks mouth-wateringly good, it's got me thinking. You see, I'm moving house next weekend and not exactly looking forward to it. But how easy would things be if you could own a portal device for real?

Moving 200 miles away? No problem! Simply drop a portal in your current house, place one in your new one, et voila! Commuting would be a thing of the past too, and drink-driving would disappear, although I'm sure that a whole new avenue of drunken misfortune would open up for portal device owners. "Helloooo? Yesh, I'm shtuck fallin' froo muh floor n roof in'n ninfinite loop. Pleash help!"

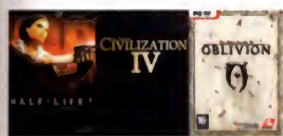
Back in the real world though, the summer sun's dried the normally steady flow of games to a mere trickle. But between the bouts of gaming tumbleweed floating through our office, we did at least manage to review *Broken Sword: The Angel Of Darkness*, *The Ship*, *Civ IV: Warlords* and *Sword Of The Stars* this month to help you through the drought...

Suzy Wallace

Suzy Wallace, reviews editor

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are our highest award, with only the best games deemed worthy of honour. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



HL2: Ep One Civilization IV Oblivion



GAME OF THE MONTH

58

BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DEATH

George Stobbart returns to prove that adventure gaming's not dead quite yet...

The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)
The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns ZONE's head is worthy of your love.



DUMP (0-19%)
Don't shirk your duty - it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

AND THE REST



ONLINE ONLY
Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



EXPANSION PACK
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know - life's not fair.



ON THE DVD
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science, we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X6a-64.

	1	2	3	4	5
CPU	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
RAM	64MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	2GB
Video	32MB	64MB	128MB	256MB	512MB

ALSO REVIEWED

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SWEARS...

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- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at yourshout@pczone.co.uk



That nun sure looks familiar...



This man has a useful key trapped in a book about geese.

Oh, I see. I thought you were one of those awful gangster rappers.



BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DEATH

First-born child *Will Porter* sees the dangers in his Biblical quest, but soldiers on...

DEVELOPER Revolution/
Sumo Digital
PUBLISHER THQ
WEBSITE
www.broken-sword.com
ETA September 15
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

In an age where decent adventure games appear as infrequently as Halley's Comet, if you like point-and-click you should check it out.

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

**BROKEN SWORD:
THE ANGEL OF DEATH** 78%
**BROKEN SWORD:
THE SLEEPING DRAGON** 75%
THE DA VINCI CODE 61%

SO THERE'S AN American, a French woman and fair few Irish men – and they all go into an international Biblical conspiracy. Either we're once again traipsing the Dan Brown stereotype fantastic, or we're back with Sir George Stobbart and his merry travails in the latest *Broken Sword*. The game series that covered all the Knights Templar hoopla years and years back. And managed to do it with more goats, half-eaten burgers and far more out-rrAGE-eous accents. Yes. George is back, his brief dalliance with consoles and mega-budgets firmly over, and this time kids – he's going to lose his virginity.

And look! We're still in 3D – a concept that *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* tackled with an intuitive (albeit Xbox-gearred) control system and a misguided belief that endless box-shifting is what life in the third dimension was all about. 'Need to get through a door? Then why don't you shift some boxes?' 'Someone's trapped in a burning barn? Well, those apparently random boxes sitting outside it look fairly useful, don't they?'

To calm any fears, let me underline that lessons have been learned in this fourth

outing for the hapless, and let's be honest fairly dim, American Sir George Stobbart. This is firmly a PC release, a more lo-fi game less dedicated to winning over the mainstream than it is to frolicking in the pools of its own fanbase and, to that end, is rather more enjoyable.

NUNS. LOTS OF NUNS

The events of *Sleeping Dragon*, its climax at Glastonbury that featured a knighthood, a dragon, a lady in a lake and Radiohead headlining have been long forgotten – George is working as a bail bond lawyer in downtown New York and has relinquished his life of high adventure, semi-comedic shoulder-shrugging and pursuit of Knights Templar artefacts. But then, in true Bogart fashion, a femme fatale called Anna Maria appears on his doorstep – hot, a bit sweaty, recently in possession of an ancient manuscript and hotly pursued by the Mafia.

Does George question her sudden appearance and motivations, or does he blindly jump into bed with her globetrotting adventures, and once more renounce his life of mediocrity for one in which he has to cut up a special mafia salami with a stolen hotel knife, in order to tie it to a washing line

which will in turn distract the dog of a guard in a Turkish palace? You do the maths...

If there was ever any doubt – this is an adventure gamer's adventure game. It's back to basics: it's the anti-*Fahrenheit*. If you don't enjoy or have never come across the bizarre internal working model of a genre that has you lugging a collection of paperclips, handkerchiefs soaked in animal fat and the aforementioned salami through areas populated solely by one or two internationally-flavoured characters, then you should approach with extreme caution.

If, however, you pine for the days of click-yore, then you should consider diving back in – *The Angel of Death* is an old-style treat. Not a perfect treat perhaps, and a bloody frustrating treat if your brain isn't in the right gear, but certainly the most amicable adventure game to have been released in aeons. Not a huge challenge, perhaps, but these are the times we live in.

POINT. CLICK. REPEAT

Affairs are now controlled through either pointing and clicking for movement and action, or using the cursors to shift George and having the mouse as a roaming utility-hotspot locator – which is by far the best



The Mafia are part of the conspiracy. And the conspiracy goes all the way to the top.

Papal shenanigans

Just when you least expect it comes a little slice of subversity...



A massage parlour for the clergy? Goodness me.

As *The Angel Of Death* progresses, it becomes genuinely subversive in its treatment of subjects like the Catholic church. On one hand you're presented with a comedy pairing of two nuns running an industrial communion wafer-processing plant on the edge of the Vatican, and on another we have a massage parlour frequented by the clergy just down the road. Just how personal these massages get, we're obviously never told – but a funny, pink, vibrating thing on a nearby shelf provides a few clues. Just below the surface, *The Angel Of Death* is a surprisingly adult game. Indeed, this is the game in which Stobbart actually manages to get his end away – and in a very respectable and grown-up way it is too, I might add.

If you pine for the days of click-yore, consider diving in – *The Angel Of Death* is an old-style treat



When in Rome... Hang from wires.



George's golfing invention is a recurring gag.



"Welcome to Castle Anthrax."

option since usable items are no longer highlighted by a friendly blue flash and are occasionally a right bugger to find. The environments in which you adventure, meanwhile, are far more self-contained and basic than those of *The Sleeping Dragon*, whose jungle-wrecked planes and thunderous Germanic castles are a far cry from the sparse hotel rooms and surprisingly basic Templar ruins beneath Istanbul that feature in this new offering.

Lighting is decent and characters are pretty enough – but you're never in any doubt that *Angel Of Death* isn't trying to hit that same 'epic' mark it went for last time round. It's more of a cosy atmosphere that's been concocted here, perhaps through the necessity of a smaller budget. But despite its slightly static and sparse nature, if you're into adventure gaming it isn't really an issue that hinders the game proper.

GORGEOUS GEORGE

Next, an admission. I've never really been that fond of George Stobbart as a lead character. I always thought him a little too dim, a little too American and a little too cheesy – and as such I'm pleased to report

that in *The Angel of Death* I started to warm to him. This is engendered in part by a plot contrivance that brilliantly uses and abuses his over-eager naivety for a huge chunk of the game, the details of which I won't go into for fear of spoilage – but it does involve nuns.

Dialogue is tighter too, generally smile-funny rather than laugh-funny, and the NPCs you come across are far better rounded as characters than before. True, many will be turned off by what the game's creators call the archetypal (some might say downright stereotypical) nature of the representatives of various nationalities who stand or sit listlessly around its street corners – but they are without doubt of a better quality than those in *The Sleeping Dragon*. *Broken Sword* games have always relied on you clicking through every line that an NPC can deliver before being allowed to progress forward – but this chore certainly chalks up far lower in the irritation stakes than in games previous.

Perhaps my favourite thing about the game is the way it doesn't skimp on its lore. Now I'm one of those people you probably hate – I read *The Da Vinci Code* and not only enjoyed it,



Slight return

Remnants of *The Sleeping Dragon* dramatically reawaken



Stobbart is no Sam Fisher.

Like arsonists returning to the scene of the crime, a few of the clumsy gameplay mechanics that spilt eggnog on the new white carpet of *The Sleeping Dragon* have returned – albeit in wiser forms. Crate-pushing is back, but you'll only ever have to push one at a time as compared to *Sleeping Dragon's* shuftage of zillions. Stealth, meanwhile, has also returned to the fore – it never quite worked in the last game, and although better here, it's still not perfect. You're never quite sure what guards can and can't see, and it's not always indicated whether you're being caught for being crap at stealth or because you haven't noticed a distraction-based puzzle.

Jon 'Log' Blyth had let himself go.



Mafia goons are a little too goonish...



Sexual tension: sizzling.

Secret doors come at a price, though. When *The Angel Of Death* wants to be hard work then it truly

is – it can be absolutely bastard-hard. I struggle to think of the last time I was so taxed by a game – and I'll freely admit to the outright shame of reaching for a walkthrough on some of the 'what's next in the sequence?' puzzles that have to be deduced to pass through the game. Hacking games get similarly complex (see 'BlackBerry Boy', page 61), and I suspect that even the bigger brains among us will be browsing the relevant Internet forums surprisingly frequently come the game's release. Then again, there's no joy quite like solving a puzzle and leaping around your monitor shouting "I'm the puzzle king!" – even if this happiness is often tempered by the presence of another, even more puzzling puzzle just around the next corner. Put simply, if you're an easily frustrated sort,

then you shouldn't be parting ways with your cash over this one. Yes, there are clues in the speech dotted here and there, but an easy ride this most certainly is not.

HARD AS GRAILS

It is worth the effort, though. *The Angel of Death* is a good story well told, despite being one that doesn't really take off until about a third of the way through the game. With less story to work with and only some fairly weak Mafia characters to support it (one of whom hilariously thinks he's Elvis), the earlier New York sections of the game are a shadow of what comes later on – specifically some great stuff in Rome and Phoenix, Arizona. That isn't to say that there's no fun elsewhere – the best part of the game comes when a mysteriously familiar nun (I told you this thing was heavy on the nuns) visits George as he languishes in an Istanbul jail, and has him presented with such break-out tools as a wind-up

but went as far as recommending it to friends and family members. I didn't like it for its daft plot, but I did like it for the historical detective work they get up to – I've just got a thing about secret doors.

Broken Sword, then, rejoins the party that it started all those years ago with a PDA just packed with information on Knights Templar, French kings and the odd pope or two. Using this and the many clues available on Anna Maria's ancient map, the opening third of the game genuinely makes you feel that you're cracking the code yourself – which may seem a bit too much like hard work for some, but is great fun for a secret-door aficionado like myself.

Behold! The map of puzzlement!



Health & Safety were about to have a field day.



Salami is vital to the plot. Sort of.

Broken Sword: scaffolders' friend.



"So the first one says, 'Wears the soap'..."



BlackBerry boy

Every jetsetting hero needs to keep in touch...



Just like in that Angelina Jolie movie...

PDA's are everywhere in games these days, but Stobbart's is probably the most utility-full one we've seen. Not only can it store a database full of Knights Templar information and be used to prank call those you come across, but it can also be used to break into everything from credit card companies to the Vatican's central server. It's a neat *Pipe Mania* meets *Minesweeper* laser guidance mini-game, but gets trickier and trickier as your adventure goes on. By the time I was infiltrating the US Army bomb disposal archive, my co-workers were brandishing tissues and mopping up pools of brain fluid that had leaked from my ears as I clicked my way through.

As a modern rendition of a traditional formula, *Angel Of Death* has both pointed and clicked wisely

mouse, a bag of marbles and a squeeze toy that cries out: 'Play with me! Play with me!' A scene that was tellingly excised from the final print of *Midnight Express*.

Ultimately, if you're a *Broken Sword* virgin you should without doubt play the demo of *The Angel Of Death* before making any purchase decisions – the hackneyed characters and delicate balance between cheese and adventure that are staple parts of the series are very much a 'marmite' issue. Some love, others hate – and if you're a noob in terms of the *Broken Sword* series, then the difficulty is also an alienation factor.

If you're returning to the happy pastures of your gaming past and know your *Broken Sword* well, then it should be on your want list – the game positively oozes with neat references and returning characters (one of whom is rather major and I purposefully haven't mentioned despite the glaring fact that she appears on the game's box). There's a warm fuzz of familiarity that covers all and sundry, despite the distinct cutback in 'grandeur' that's hit the series. It's hard, its opening acts don't match the quality of those which follow and some characters grate – but as a modern rendition

of a traditional formula, *The Angel Of Death* has both pointed and clicked wisely. It's another nail out of the adventure gaming coffin – although admittedly quite a few remain. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Fairly lo-fi, characters pretty enough
Sound Nice music, usual BS voice-acting
Multiplayer Not round these parts

- ✓ A must-have for fans of the series
- ✓ Good story, well told
- ✓ Pleasantly drowns you in lore
- ✗ Rock-hard difficulty in places
- ✗ Only fans of the genre need apply

78

Mouse/brain exercise



CIVILIZATION IV: WARLORDS



Will Porter learns more about Genghis Khan than he did from any Bill & Ted movie...

DEVELOPER Firaxis
PUBLISHER 2K Games
WEBSITE
www.firaxis.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99

AT A GLANCE...

Some war-tinged gameplay tweaks and six absorbing, deep Firaxis-made mods to supplement the thinking man's game of conquest. Destruction in tile-based form.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

CIVILIZATION IV	92%
CIVILIZATION IV: WARLORDS	78%
CIVILIZATION III: PLAY THE WORLD	55%

THERE ARE TWO different sorts of *Civ* player, and for the sake of international dispute I'll label them as falling into the categories of the United States outlook and the British outlook. I'm not about to go off on one about foreign policy either, we're talking mindset here.

Those who play in the mindset of Americana are confident and out to win: they're either right in there taking over the world from the off, or running up the tech-tree full-pelt in pursuit of interstellar travel. They're forthright, they're righteous and they're unstoppable. Remember, I'm still talking mindset, I know reality sometimes begs to differ.

The Brit outlook, meanwhile, thinks all the fuss is faintly silly – they play *Civ* to pass the time in an amusing fashion. If they come to the close of the game and have kicked enough shit out of their neighbours to think themselves noteworthy in the annals of history, then they're quietly satisfied. After all, it's the taking part that counts – and half the fun was calling their capital city a silly name don't you know? As you can probably tell, however, *Warlords* is geared to the former.

In terms of core gameplay fiddling, Firaxis haven't pushed the template too much, but the small tweaks they have introduced are excellent. The ability to keep a subdued race as a vassal state, for example, occurs rarely, but is a lovely touch.

WELCOME TO MY WORLD

Once you've played with the eponymous Warlord units, meanwhile, it's hard to go back to vanilla warmongering. Acting as a Great Person unit would usually do (being able to build military academies, bond with cities and perform other such tasks), the chief and most exciting abilities of a Warlord are to tie him to a military unit (giving a 25XP boost to the experience of all those gathered on its tile). It's then time to watch him galumph around the map, being victorious with his free upgrades and special promotions until he inevitably meets his Waterloo and you chew the carpet in despair. It's a great new system superbly integrated – so hooray for large-scale carnage in that department. And a double hoorah for new units like the nifty naval battle-bitch that is the Trireme and the trusty Trebuchet.

The lion's share of *Warlords* isn't simple gameplay tucks though – it comes in the form of six individual campaigns; mods that have been soldered together in the very heart of the Firaxis furnace. Why create such things when there's tons of good fanboy material available on the Net?

Well perhaps because, despite their wide span, I'd argue that very little *Civ* fan-made content feels entirely solid. This is a game, after all, in which the tiniest of stat-fiddles can bring about great disturbance in the force – and more importantly, there's never any guarantee that multiplayer competitors can be found running the same add-ons. With *Warlords* then, comes some excellent non-fan fare that's not only preened to perfection, but also genuinely provides novel spins on the *Civ* format.

BLOND AND BEAUTIFUL

My own personal favourite, perhaps due to over-exposure to the meaty/poo-ey gas that hangs heavy over York's Jorvik Viking Centre as a child, covers the age of Vikings. Here, you're encouraged to form hairy raiding parties in your Scandinavian bases, pile them into longboats and send them across

Nothing more fun than a nautical assault.

3

Ransom?

Would you like to ransom this city back to its original owner? (If you attack a city you have previously ransomed, the city will accept your ransom offer in the future.)

Yes

No

1

Edinburgh

First we take the woollen mills!

Warlords is not only preened to perfection, but also provides novel spins on the Civ format

the sea. This covers the expanse of the North Sea in eight-turn bursts, with an avowed intent to rack up 45,750 nuggets of pilfered gold before your allotted turns dry out. This creates a brilliant back-and-forth system as you ferry units to aid your raping and pillaging (let's face it, the Vikings didn't come here to visit Legoland Windsor), and genuinely channels your accustomed Civ play-style into something new, warm and barbaric. In fact, each is so stuffed with new technologies, units and research topics (Barbarian Assimilation II and Wedge Assault anyone?), that each scenario at first feels alien – an entirely new game to discover piled into the Civ framework. As Jarvis Cocker once opined: this is hardcore.

It's in these scenarios, more than ever, that you start to realise the

Barbarian invasion

Every strategy expansion pack has barbarians. *Warlords* lets you be them

All they want to do is ride around, Sally.



A clever addition to the scenario stable of six sees you playing as perennial civilisation-baiters the barbarians, who must destroy civilisation after the computer has seen it advance through 20, 40 or 60 turns – depending on how good a vandal you are. Extra units can be purchased with the spoils of your luddite-society bashing and much fun can be had by all. I'd have rather been playing as a roaming mountain lion faction, but beggars can't be choosers.

Greece: had better statues than the Romans. True story.



This is me kicking arse in Turkey.



Yes I Khan! No you Khan't! One intriguing scenario *Warlords* provides rids itself of the pesky idea of civilisation altogether – letting you take charge of Genghis Khan's nomadic band of bastards...



These here are my camp units – they spit out fighter units when they feel like it. I love them. They help me kill people.



Every two cities I burn I get a tech advance, which helps me kill even more people. So I think I'm going to wipe them out. All of them.



This is Genghis himself: he may look like a Power Ranger right now, but he's going to help me kill people in even nastier ways.



This is Shah Muhammad II – he doesn't like me as I killed all his neighbours. Deep down he probably wants to be my friend, but soon he'll be dead.



Sure, he looks friendly now...



Now the setting for ITV's *Club Reps* series.



Chinese history made interactive.



value of your chosen civilisation's unique units (aforementioned Vikings have Berserker axemen, Celts get Gallic Warriors and so on) – which can often be upgraded through various levels via each scenario's epoch-specific research tree. Also available, meanwhile, are more goal-led research possibilities – my new friends the Vikings, for example, being able to dedicate a few turns to learn which areas of the map hide huge stockpiles of treasure.

So you can unify China, destroy Asia as Genghis Khan, engage in the Grecian tussles that were the Peloponnesian wars, promote or defy the rise of Rome or parade through the world willy-nilly as famed hero and ladyboy Alexander. What's more, all the expected *Civ IV* gloss remains; as well as each scenario being cleverly mapped and really quite demanding, challenges come with their own characteristic music and attentive soldier noises – although the nature of the beast means that the beautiful tones of Leonard Nimoy are generally absent.

REQUIRED READING?

But is it worth it? It just depends on how you play *Civ*. If you play it as a sandbox diplomacy factory to while away the hours and get your fun through the joy of creation then, despite the allure of the Warlord unit, society will not crumble if you don't buy this. If, however, you love the mechanics of Meier's creation and its complicated war-waging systems, then *Warlords* conjures up some imaginative and unique spins on the traditional template way beyond anything you'd ever find elsewhere.

In all honesty, in six month's time when I sit down to a *Civ* session, it's unlikely that it'll be a *Warlords* scenario – I'm too entrenched in the bread-and-butter 'settle and expand' game I've been playing since I was 13 for that. For the next little while though, Firaxis have crafted some clever nuggets of *Civ* that have forced me out of my cave, and into a remarkable number of new tactical directions. Not so much an expansion – more six little intricate waterfalls of complexity that siphon hours of gameplay from the vast *Civ* reservoir. It's a success, but one that runs far deeper than some might like. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Ever-so-slightly improved animations
Sound Loads of new music
Multiplayer Yup – still there

- ✓ Well integrated Warlord concept
- ✓ Very cleverly designed and unique scenarios
- ✓ Way deeper than you're expecting
- ✗ Not for *Civ* day-trippers
- ✗ Not strictly necessary

79

Needless, but nice



BATTLE OF EUROPE

Rotten sorts
at six o'clock

DEVELOPER Maus Software
PUBLISHER Black Bean
WEBSITE
www.boe.blackbeangames.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

System requirements 2

YOU KNOW THAT feeling, as you watch an installation progress bar, thinking, 'this is a tunnel at the end of which there is no light?' And you want to hurl yourself under your mouse – but even in your desperation, you're aware that a computer mouse will have no crushing effect on your vast torso?

Black Bean were responsible for *Iron Warriors*, a tank simulator so joylessly realistic and unbeautiful as to briefly ruin my working life. So, it was a pleasant surprise and considerable relief to play *Battle Of Europe*, which is considerably better-looking and firmly plumps for arcade action. Take-offs are absurdly short, shooting down a non-mission plane leaves behind a bunch of floating power-ups, along with not-strictly-1940s technology such as



superbullets, turbo boost and a one-key Immelmann manoeuvre.

It's not all cuddles and kisses, though. Despite being instantly simple and enjoyable to play, *Battle Of Europe* loses out in a number of areas. For a start, it's quite restrictive in its strict campaign progression, lacking the skirmish-y flexibility and multiplayer options of *IL2*. The storyline also takes the form of between-level diary entries, which read like an explosion in a badly translated cliché factory. Expect lines like: "I used to hate heights, but now I can't wait to show them what side our bread is buttered on."

Finally, and this might seem like a minor point, but I'm of the unshakeable opinion that – of all the fonts – Comic Sans has no place in a game with flying Nazis. Typography aside, *Battle Of Europe* is an enjoyable game that simply fails to distinguish itself as a particularly great one.

Jon Blyth



FOR LIBERTY!

Time to spoil the
Yanks' party

DEVELOPER Hussar Games
PUBLISHER Battlefront
WEBSITE www.battlefront.com/products/forliberty/index.html
ETA Out now (download)
PRICE \$35 (£19)

System requirements 2

IMAGINE HOW DIFFERENT it would have been if Britain had won the American War Of Independence. Right now, Harry Ramsden's would be the planet's largest fast-food chain, Tom Cruise would be in *EastEnders* and July 4 would mean toss-all.

These wistful thoughts can be made reality in *For Liberty!*, a turn-based strategy title charting the eight-year 18th-century struggle by a bunch of US cotton barons to pay less tax to a bonkers king called George. Developed by Hungarian company Hussar Games (presumably in return for a green card), in many ways, *For Liberty!* is a kind of under-funded *Total War*. You have a large-scale strategic map, where your armies are deployed and your war effort managed, and you have a tactical layer where the individual battles are

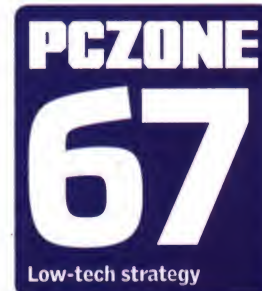


fought. Only unlike *Total War*, here both elements are painstakingly turn-based.

With a succinct interface and simple, nicely thought-out hex-based gameplay, *For Liberty!* encapsulates the decisions that confronted the Brits and their unruly colonists, without swamping you with rules.

After a swift tutorial, you'll be manoeuvring regiments like Mel Gibson in *The Patriot*. The tactical battles are really satisfying, revolving around how many of the enemy you can rout, rather than kill. But seeing as most defeated troops run away to fight another day, and the fact you're fighting battles the length of the North American continent, getting any meaningful results takes forever. And once the armies swell in size, the laborious job of shuffling them around the battlefield is like shovelling coal. A game for those who, in an earlier age, would have collected tin soldiers.

Steve O'Hagan





THE SHIP

Jon Blyth is going to murder someone with a kitchen knife. Is it you?

DEVELOPER Outerlight
PUBLISHER Outerlight
WEBSITE
www.theshiponline.com
ETA September
PRICE \$1999 (£11)
via Steam, £1999 boxed



AT A GLANCE...

A Source update of an old *Half-Life* mod that has you quietly butchering your way around a cruise ship.

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE 79%

RED ORCHESTRA 78%

THE SHIP 75%

ONE DAY, YOU receive a letter from a man who calls himself Mr X. He says you've won a free cruise, with \$2,500 of spending money thrown in for free. You're so excited that you start talking in italics. *"It's like I've won Catchphrase! This Mr X geezer must be some kind of... Philanthropic Mr Chips!"*

But Mr X wears a very high top hat, a hat in which evil plans are hatched. The second you're onboard, you – and every other guest onboard – have a simple mission: kill one of the other passengers. Do so, and he'll give you more money. Refuse, and... Well, you're just making life easier for the person who's got to murder you.

So the action begins, and so the action stays: find a weapon, find your quarry (you only have a name, and can only find out who people are by getting close enough to 'talk' to them), and bide your time until they go into an unsupervised corridor or a bedroom where you can finish them off. Follow too closely, and they'll realise you're up to something. Kill anyone who isn't your quarry, and you'll be penalised.

The Ship, formerly *The Ship Online*, has its roots in a *Half-Life* mod that scored a

Classic in *ZONE's* online section at the end of 2004. Now, it's been scrubbed up and trolleyed over to the Source engine and released both on Steam and in boxes. It sounds simple, but it's an excellent recipe for enjoyable tension and paranoia. Especially with the restraints the game puts on your behaviour, forcing you into the ship to interact with people and surroundings.

DO YOUR BUSINESS

First, your needs – a set of basic human needs that compel you to roam the ship. If you hide in a cabin, you'll eventually die from loneliness and accrued filth. You need to relax, by dancing or reading, sleep, stay clean and occasionally have a wee. Neglect your needs and you'll suffer penalties, messy accidents and eventually death.

Weapons are all over the ship, from the publicly accessible (fire axes), to the less obvious (syringes in the first aid area), to the top-value killing weapons in secret areas. Getting hold of the rarer weapons (which generally earn you more money for the kill) can take you on a trek – which feels even longer because of the polite '30s pace of your walking. You can only run for a

couple of seconds before resting, and this sharply increases the claustrophobia; escaping your murderer when you're unarmed can involve managing your sprint time and edging them into an area. Then blowing raspberries from behind a security guard like a period *Scrappy Doo*. Knowing the layout of the ship is essential to success.

SHADY ARCADE

One of the few additions to the mod is the arcade mode – a single-player version of the online action against AI. It's hardly worth bothering, though. If you really need training up, the AI is too A and not I enough to improve your play. Even if you're not burdened with skills, it's like Jocky Wilson throwing darts into a crowd of tetraplegics; use this mode only to explore the ships. The other match styles add little, too – for the variation they offer, all deathmatch, elimination and duel do is remove an element of the inspired default 'hunt' mode.

There's still a couple of glitches to be fixed; as I played, a graphical quirk allowed me to interrupt a need-filling animation – you can find yourself roaming the ship in a

The second you're onboard, you and every other guest have a simple mission: kill another passenger...

Only human

Murderers need to floss too



The needs of a murderer are often overlooked, in this victim-oriented justice system that seeks to 'punish' the 'people who kill each other on a ship'. So perhaps the most sobering part of *The Ship* is the implicit admission that the demonised murderer is, in fact, a human being, who showers, sleeps and dances to stave off the madness that comes from killing others. It's perhaps the most interesting psychological study in modern gaming. The only thing that's missing is a boss level where Mr X appears with squid's legs and tries to smother you with a flag. Perhaps.



sitting position, drinking some tea. At one point I was roaming the ship, dancing, with a stream of piss cascading from my trousers. It felt like the most decadent thing in the world, especially when I approached a guard to have a chat and piddled on his leg. Another victory won by me, and felt by no-one. I should add that Outerlight are aware of this, though, and by the time you hold this, the Steam iron should have already ironed out this filthy (but excellent) crease.

The Ship is a wonderful idea, and a thoughtful variation on multiplayer gameplay – what intensity you lose from speed, you gain from tension. It looks lovely – if rather right-angled – and the characters are inspired creations from the worlds of Wodehouse and Christie. The radio broadcasts and music littered around the ship sounds marvellous. The main concern is that the game is, by its very nature, slightly repetitive and limited in scope for a commercial release – but that's reflected in the price, and it's a unique experience that's well worth trying out. **PCZ**



PCZONE

Graphics Simplistic 1930s loveliness
Sound Fantastic period banter and music
Multiplayer Absolutely

- ✓ Excellent, fun concept
- ✓ Very well executed
- ✓ Perfect period artwork and sound
- ✓ Unique gameplay
- ✓ Cheap
- ✗ Terrible AI in single-player mode
- ✗ Necessarily limited by the idea

75

All aboard all aboard wo-oh



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TYPICAL APR*

18.9%



STRATEGIC COMMAND 2: BLITZKRIEG

Hexagons are the new polygons

DEVELOPER Fury Software
PUBLISHER Battlefront Software
WEBSITE www.battlefront.com/products/sc2/
ETA Out now (download)
PRICE \$45 (£25)

System requirements 1

WHEN MY GREY square – the one with the oblong drawn on it – flopped onto the hexagon marked 'Moscow', an unlikely exhilaration coursed through my body. What this curious, unsightly meeting of geometric shapes represented was the fall of the Russian capital to my veteran German Panzer divisions, and seeing it happen after a long, hard-fought Eastern Front campaign frankly made me want to abuse myself.

Strategic Command 2, like its predecessor, looks about as bad as a PC game can get. A rudimentary map scrawled from North Africa to Norway, little squares with arcane symbols etched on them representing armies and not an explosion, texture or even a polygon in sight. But despite this, with its no-nonsense turn-based



Graphics really weren't a priority.

gameplay and simple though deep mechanics, it lets you re-fight the entire war in Europe, controlling everything from researching new weapons, recruiting new armies and influencing other nations to join your cause. This is strategy gaming at its most megalomaniac. Land your Panzer armies in Norfolk and overrun the home counties. Invade Switzerland for being such layabout, neutral wastrels. Pound Paris into dust from the air, simply because you had to pay £6 for a beer there once. Western Europe is your war-despoiled oyster.

It's a return to cottage industry games design, and is no bad thing for it. Because with no board of investors to answer to, the team behind *Strategic Command 2* have fashioned an effective, old school strategy game of properly strategic proportions.

Steve O'Hagan



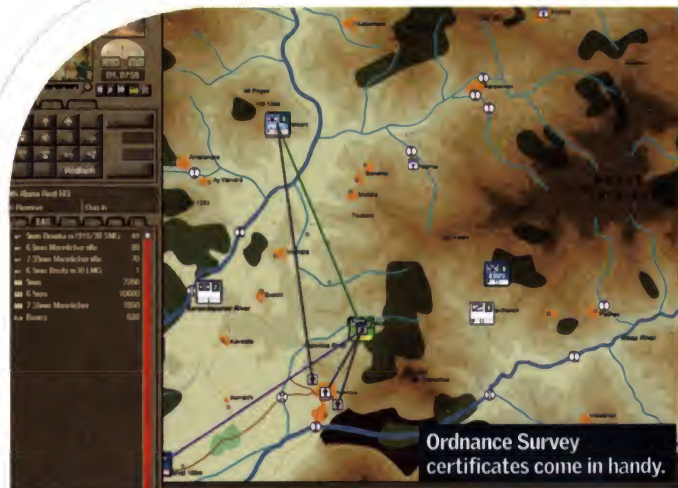
Improve your geography.

Strategic Map

PCZONE

74

Old school strategy



AIRBORNE ASSAULT: CONQUEST OF THE AEGEAN

First off, where is the Aegean?

DEVELOPER Panther Games
PUBLISHER Matrix Games
WEBSITE cota.matrixgames.com/
ETA Out now (download)
PRICE \$49.99 (£27)

System requirements 2

NOT THE PACKAGE holiday tycoon sim the title suggests, *Conquest Of The Aegean* is a detailed WWII RTS simulating Germany's attempt to control Greece, Malta and Crete by paratroopers – not towels – at dawn. This is no *Sudden Strike* – it looks like postage stamps crawling over an Ordnance Survey map – but it's a pretty engrossing cookie. The level of detail and realism is enough to make most sane people vomit. But for those into the simulation side of things, *COTA* is a treasure trove of tactical realism.

Built like some kind of military training sim, the game models everything from the cohesion, morale and experience of the troops, down to the last bullet, grenade and ration pack each unit has in its stores. You



She's no looker.

soon realise that under the bonnet an incredible AI engine is churning away, sending out orders, reacting to the enemy, distributing supplies, and firing artillery in support.

Once you learn to trust your AI assistant, there's no need to laboriously dole out orders to every last Tommy, Dick and Hans. Rather, you can tell a couple of HQs what to do and they'll take care of the cannon fodder. Slick. We hammered the first *Airborne Assault* a little, largely because the computer opponent can't seem to tell its arsenal from its elbow. This is still somewhat the case, making this primarily a multiplayer melee.

Strategy gaming doesn't get much more hardcore than this. But if you, as I, have ever harboured ambitions of serving as quartermaster to a major military formation, this is for you.

Steve O'Hagan



Attack by night: the map looks nicer.

PCZONE

72

Hardest of the core

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The Mortok are one of six races.

DARKSTAR ONE

Richie Shoemaker tries to review a space combat game without mentioning the 'E' game... And fails miserably



DEVELOPER Ascaron
PUBLISHER Ascaron
WEBSITE www.darkstarone.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

Story-laden space opera filled with planets, spaceships and various stock aliens. Hop aboard your mysterious ship, make some money to upgrade it, then find out who killed your poor old pops – and why.

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

X3: REUNION 92%

FREELANCER 84%

DARKSTAR ONE 66%

GIVEN THAT *ELITE* is over 20 years old, it's becoming increasingly tiresome to have to resort to mentioning its name when a new spacefaring game comes out. Yet in the case of *Darkstar One* we're duty bound to do so, for on reading through the manual for Ascaron's space title, the similarities are almost litigious.

You are a young buck starpilot, your father hides a murky past and expires before the game starts, and before you is a universe to explore with systems neatly categorised by their style of government. You can trade drugs, become a pirate, accept missions, raise cash and upgrade your ship with military lasers, missiles and even reach the heady heights of being called 'dangerous'. If I wasn't being so selective in my comparisons, you could almost call it spooky.

Thankfully, seeing as the game occupies almost as many gigs as *Elite* did kilobytes, there's much more to *DSO* than it being a straight remake. Indeed, arriving as it does at the arcade end of the space game continuum, *Darkstar One* is clearly trying to be all things to all space gamers. Not only

have comparisons been made with the scope of *Elite*, but also the storytelling of *Wing Commander*, the accessibility of *Freelancer* and the graphical exuberance of *X3: Reunion*. To space gamers like myself, starved of quality product, *Darkstar One* might seem like the second coming.

PLANET PATROL

Sadly, while *DSO*'s roots draw from a wealth of classic games, they don't draw deeply enough. You see, far from being a dynamic and open-ended game, you're compelled to stick to the storyline that threads neatly but predictably through the game. Each cluster of planets that opens up is almost a self-contained level, offering the exact same missions as before – and with a side-mission that is a kind of end-of-level battle that leads onto tackling the next cluster. After some tedious 'searching' inside asteroids to pick up containers to upgrade your ship, it's off to the next cluster, where pirates bring in more bounties and equipment is more expensive – but where nothing really changes.

Trading is relatively sophisticated with prices falling and rising as AI trading ships flit about. Busy systems are often clogged

with ships trying to dock and undock with the system's sole trading station. This AI-sponsored bustle certainly gives the game some life, but not nearly enough. Each system is pretty much the same; one trading station, a navigable asteroid or two, maybe a research station (which you can't dock with) and, if you're really lucky, a space wreck (where pirate gangs hide out). Players who like to explore will find *DSO*'s lack of variety, overt hand-holding and storyline restrictions will kill off any sense of wanderlust.

And that's pretty much *DSO*'s biggest issue; that everything is signposted for you without any kind of thinking required. And even if you do decide to try out life on the other side of the law, or to engage in trade, the experience is often futile and almost always unprofitable. Far from being fun, piracy is merely a tool to shoot yourself in the foot, and why should you trade when you can acquire more cash quicker simply by selecting a ship nearby and offering to escort it to the next system?

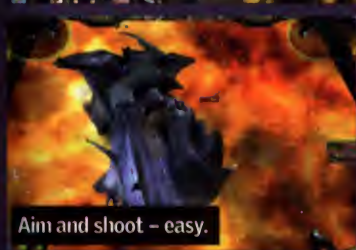
It's just not what many hoped it would be – a spiritual successor to *Freelancer*; in fact, *DSO* comes across as under-developed. *Freelancer* took five years to



Twenty pirates are no match for a fully souped-up Darkstar One.



No, you can't walk about in 3D.



Aim and shoot – easy.



The DSO is the only ship you'll fly.



Upgrade your jump drive to extend your range.



DSO isn't totally devoid of atmosphere.

The joy of sticks

Newsflash for users of 8-way hat switches. You know who you are...



Don't lose control of the fast rocket now.

Having assumed most of us have long since thrown out our force-feedback joysticks, Ascaron have opted for the mouse as the primary control method. It works along the same lines as it did in *Freelancer*, with the mouse controlling heading, A and D keys for strafing and W and S for afterburner/reverse thrust. The system works well enough, although when going back to *Freelancer* you realise Microsoft's game was a little more intuitive.

The joystick is less well developed, with it being next to impossible to customise a decent stick properly. Ascaron have been listening to complaints from the Saitek X52 Owners' Club, however, and are working to improve stick support before, or soon after, release.

Far from being a dynamic and open-ended game, you're compelled to stick to the predictable storyline



An aerial view of something.



Earth – one of 300 near-identical solar systems.

make and was still criticised for its short story. Ascaron have tried to make amends by going down the epic space opera route, but the day-glo aliens and am-dram voices, while campy and fun, are strung out over far too much an area, giving you too much time to second guess the outcome.

While *DSO* might not stand up to a second run-through – though it's tempting given the way the central ship, the titular DSO, can be upgraded – I still found myself doggedly trying to wring as much enjoyment from the game as possible, simply because the arrival of a space game is such a rare thing. Sticking to the story is the best path forward and if you do that, you won't feel too cheated. But going back to *Freelancer*, you realise how unevolved *DSO* really is. With regard to more recent competition, the *X* series' universe is much more dynamic and vibrant, *DSO* does story better, but very little else. **C-4**

PCZONE

Graphics Samey, but colourful
Sound Very good, actually
Multiplayer Only for schizophrenics

- ✓ Easy-peasy to ease into
- ✓ Lengthy space opera with added go-anywhere bits
- ✓ Decent cut-scenes
- ✗ Lacks variety
- ✗ Not as freeform as it makes out

66

Competent



Everyone in New York drives one of these. Apart from the people who don't.



TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY

Truth is less entertaining than fiction, discovers *Jon Blyth*

DEVELOPER Luxoflux
PUBLISHER Deep Silver
WEBSITE
www.truecrime.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99



AT A GLANCE...

Stop crime and avenge a surrogate father in this sub-GTA good-cop-bad-cop rigmarole.

System requirements

4

HOW IT STACKS

GTA: SAN ANDREAS 92%

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA 69%

TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY 33%

AS DAMNING INSULTS go, sub-GTA is hardly a very big one. But to get across how sub-GTA *True Crime: NYC* is – and especially the PC version – you'd need a metaphor well beyond the capabilities of modern poetry. To summarise, you're a multi-murdering thug turned cop, out to avenge the death of his partner. You do this by taking cars off people. It doesn't look amazing – but the reproduction of NYC is familiar enough to make me want to stop the car and find that shop that sold me a shit digital camera in 1999.

For review, *True Crime: NYC* can be split into three parts. First, there's the five minute pre-game set-up, recounting your days as a street thug. This introduces you to the game's enduring themes: shaky frame-rates, awkwardly ported controls and embarrassing dialogue. It's staggering that a game that looks this average – a patch of flowers in Central Park looks like a purple and green chessboard – could be so demanding. What's all that processor power doing? Every person dies in the

exact same way, for Christ's sake. It's not like we're dealing with physics here. What's more, with occasional dips to eight frames-per-second, we're barely dealing with animation.

As for the controls, you can either aim with the unresponsive mouse controls or press Shift-F to automatic aim, shoot and kill. Up to you, really. Frustration or funless is the choice.

The second part of the game is your tutorial, where you're coaxed by the prompts to come off your mouse and use the keypad. Then, with both hands typing, you realise how utterly shoddy the port is – the only difference between *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing* and *True Crime: NYC* is that Mavis comes across as a believable character.

GOOD COP, BAD COP

Then there's the third part, the game itself, which is so unspectacular as to barely warrant comment. No effort at all has been put into it, beyond 'making it work, just'. The good-cop-bad-cop system is fine, but '+7 Bad' coming from your head is ridiculously artificial. If you absolutely

must play this game, and the wretched commercial system that chugged out this idiot child hasn't put you off the whole sorry shebang, then get a console version. Please don't buy this. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Adequate, occasionally 1998-y
Sound Good soundtrack, bad acting
Multiplayer No sir

- ✓ It works
- ✗ It doesn't work very well
- ✗ Repetitive
- ✗ Baffling bystander behaviour
- ✗ Takes itself really seriously, considering it's shit

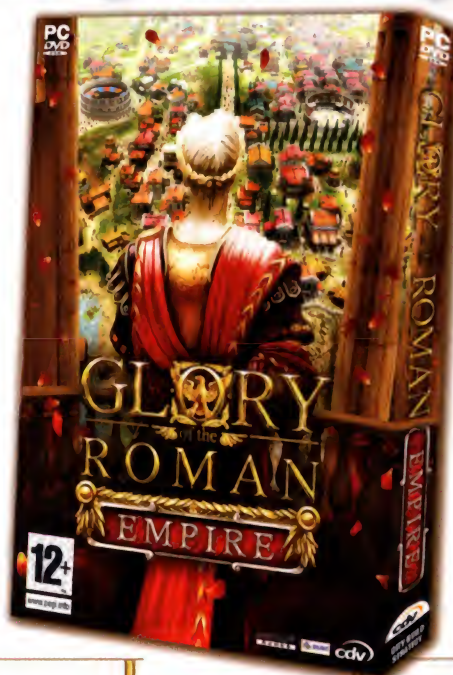
33

No consolation

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SWORD OF THE STARS



Two space games in a month? Please bring *Richie Shoemaker* back down to earth

DEVELOPER Kerberos Productions
PUBLISHER Lighthouse
WEBSITE www.swordofthestars.com
ETA September 1
PRICE £29.95

AT A GLANCE...

Want to rule the galaxy? Intimidated by the stat-heavy alternatives? Then *Sword Of The Stars* could be the game to fire your thrusters.

System requirements

2

HOW IT STACKS

ROME: TOTAL WAR 93%

SWORD OF THE STARS 83%

GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS II 65%

YES, WE'RE LOOKING forward to the next *Total War* as much as anyone, but why do we have to march over the same medieval territory when there are countless futures to explore? Come on, deep down you've often wondered if *Total War* could work in space. I know I have, and after playing *Sword Of The Stars*, I now know it does. Really rather well, in fact.

Not that *SOTS* displays any obvious similarities. In fact, apart from a mind meld of turn-based strategy and real-time battlefield tactics, the two games couldn't be more different if one included some Hypersports-infused button-mashing. Instead of developing each of your provinces, or, rather, star systems, progression here is dominated almost entirely by a technological arms race and the worry over the sustainability of an ageing fleet in the face of mounting costs.

Now, that may not sound very exciting over a bowl of Corn Flakes, but here in deepest space such things add invariably to the tension. I'll even admit, that as my insectoid neighbours started moving into my territory, and in realising their dreadnoughts would soon be ripping through my piddly fleet unless I could quickly negotiate some breathing space, I did an inky-piss squirt in my pants.

A CHANGE OF PACE

Not that every civilisation will survive long enough to worry about such things. Smaller games set across dozens of planets rather than hundreds will have you fighting for survival from the get-go, siphoning funds away from research to reinforce the homeworld. That's the beauty of the game; that despite any kind of narrative or recognisable campaign, the variety afforded by the various set-up options makes for

games that range from frenetic to pedestrian. The whole base-building aspect is entirely abstracted and the game is all the better for it, for in the latter stages, when in more pedantic games you might end up frustrated at having to micro-manage an empire of 50-plus systems, here you'll still be happily building fleets and not feeling at all overwhelmed.

Some people are going to hate the lack of minute micro-management, but one beneficial side effect of such streamlining is that the game works so well in multiplayer. Turns are simultaneous, and since there's little to physically do apart from move fleets, set research and manufacturing queues and scout around the 3D map, they pass relatively quickly. If two or more fleets meet up, a 3D battle ensues, which can be set to last for just a couple of minutes, which, if ending in stalemate, will simply continue on the next turn.

Ship shapes

There's more to this than meets the eye

Ship Designs

Ship Stats

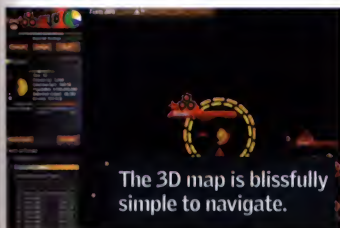
Ship Name	Destroyer	Sovereign Cost	175,304	Barrels	9
Construction Cost	5,049	Armor	8,193	Medium	90
Missiles	25,500	Range	5.0	Large	1
Speed	8.5	Special	1	Small	1

Weapon Layout

Save Design

Pimp my spaceship.

There are four races, each able to field the same three vessel types; destroyers, cruisers and dreadnoughts. This may not sound like a wide variety of ships, but the fact you can choose between a number of front, middle and rear sections, upgrade their effectiveness through research and select a wide variety of weapons for each mounting makes for an incredibly diverse set of attack and support ship options. Best of all, thanks to such customisation, it can be hard for your opponent to know what your ships are packing before it's too late.



Could *Total War* work in space? Having played *SOTS*, I know it does

The real-time battles offer more evidence of *Total War*'s significance, where organisation, placement and timing (and overwhelming firepower – if possible), are the key tactical ingredients. Which brings us back to research and technology, and how it opens up the game the longer it goes on and the more weapons become available.

The problem with *Sword Of The Stars* is universal in all games where galactic domination is the focus; for depending on whether you ambitiously effect a sprawling universe, or a small one, to begin with you'll either be bored or quickly trounced. There's a distinct lack of visual feedback in the battles which seems to be purposeful, and the interface can be fiddly to navigate. But despite these minor irritations, in much the same way that *Total War* proved that the war game could be stunning to look at, accessible and fun, *SOTS* is almost as impressive in its own low-budget way.

PCZONE

Graphics Garish but they grow on you
Sound Sparse sound, repetitive voices
Multiplayer Customisable eight-player skirmishes, online or LAN

- ✓ Effective technology options
- ✓ A breeze to learn
- ✓ Easily customisable ships
- ✓ Superb multiplayer mode
- ✗ Lacks any narrative drive
- ✗ Some UI issues

83

A heavenly body

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DEVIL MAY CRY 3: DANTE'S AWAKENING

The detail's in the devil

DEVELOPER Capcom
PUBLISHER Capcom/Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.capcom.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

System requirements 3

A LONG WITH *ONIMUSHA 3* and *Resi 4*, the third *Devil May Cry* is one of a trio of Capcom's flagship console titles currently being ported to PC. The magnificent *Resident Evil 4* is the pick of the bunch (and will be unleashed in September), but the third outing for demon-hunter Dante is still worth picking up if you appreciate fast, brainless and violent monster-twatting.

Dante's Awakening continues the third-person action-adventure series, with the dual-gun and sword-wielding hero taking on his evil demon twin in some rather beautiful, post-apocalyptic gothic environments. You tear through missions that mostly involve hacking and slashing and/or shooting various nasties. You also collect bonuses for particularly 'dope' combos, and red orbs that you can trade in for better weapons, new



moves or items such as level continues or health boosts.

Combat is straightforward, often involving just the hammering of a couple of buttons on a joypad, but the stylish way you can mix up your attacks to see off the hell-beasts is pretty satisfying stuff. The option to enhance your gun/blade skills or change your fighting style does offer an extra incentive to progress through the typically shallow console storyline, and the later Devil Trigger ability allows you to unleash merry hell.

DMC3 has a few conversion issues – low-res textures and fiddly joypad setting-up – and the lack of quicksaves can be infuriating when you have to begin a boss battle all over again, but overall it's infernal fun.

Jamie Sefton



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE LEGEND OF JACK SPARROW

Sparrow's new adventure is a bottle of bum

DEVELOPER 7 Studios
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE pirates.bethsoft.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

System requirements 2

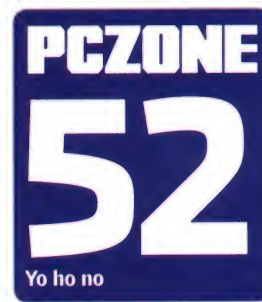
PIRATES MAY BE innately cool, but they're no guarantee of quality. For every *Monkey Island*, there's a *Tortuga*, and for every drunken, loveless Johnny Depp, there's a stupid, romantic Errol Flynn. Look, you pirates – Dr Who doesn't go around falling in love with lady Timelords; you lot would do well to behave with similar decorum.

Now I love pirates, and hearing Depp recreate Jack Sparrow on my computer is a fine way to get my hand reaching into the wicker basket of Classic medals we keep in the office. Sadly, Depp's involvement adds buggery-nuts to the gameplay here. Even that sense of guilt that goes with bitching about a game aimed at children doesn't make up for the scurvy rot in Jack Sparrow's marrow.

On first inspection, it looks great – and once you've got your head around the controls, which are unnecessarily linked to a series of icons rather than keys, you'll settle into some lip-stretchingly repetitive hacking. *Legend Of Jack Sparrow* really wants to be *Devil May Cry*, or *God Of War* – with lots of fighting, soft-heavy attack combos and regular attack upgrades – but the upgrades are barely noticeable, and the combos are so watered down as to be just another way of attacking. It's neither swash nor buckle.

The script and acting is great, but the imagination going into the levels is hugely lacking – the first two bosses are killed in identical ways (simply throw axes, no timing required), the lack of colour is unexciting, and I'd like to think that children who play Jack Sparrow will be annoyed by the strong sense that they're being patronised by someone who hasn't even proved his own intelligence.

Jon Blyth





AGE OF PIRATES: CARIBBEAN TALES

Totally Orlando
Bloom-free!

DEVELOPER Akella
PUBLISHER Atari
WEBSITE www.playlogicgames.com/aopct/
ETA September 1
PRICE £29.99

System requirements 4



HOT ON THE heels of the summer's biggest blockbuster comes this action-adventure casting you as an 18th-century Caribbean buccaneer. With a ship, a cutlass and a nose for booty, you're unleashed on a free-roaming island-hopping campaign of looting and pillaging. Yargh!

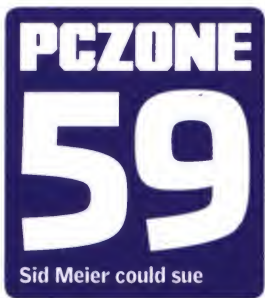
Perhaps extending the spirit of their subject matter a little too far, the developers of *Age Of Pirates* have plundered Sid Meier's *Pirates!* lock, stock and barrel of rum. The structure of the game is virtually identical. Hang out at the Inn for some rumours and some crew; visit the governor's palace for a Letter of Marque; fence opposing captains when you board their ships; ferry some passengers, trade some cargo, capture rival settlements. Even the over-arching

family quest is a straight pull from Sid's minor classic.

What it does bring to the party is a hint of RPG-style levelling-up, and a picturesque engine that renders some fine sunset views. Watch as your crewmen scuttle among the rigging, marvel at the rippling, reflective ocean.

It's a game you want to like, all that buccaneering on azure blue seas, trading broadsides with passing Spaniards and indulging in sodomy with the powder monkey. Trouble is, from the unfriendly, baffling set-up screen, everything is unwieldy and cobbled together. Boarding battles are unsophisticated rucks, finding the right people in port can be a lottery and ship-to-ship combat is frustratingly inexact. There are pieces of great in here, but the whole thing's not quite seaworthy.

Steve O'Hagan



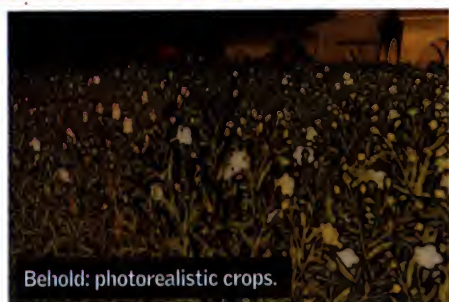
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REVIEWS ROMA VICTOR



ROMA VICTOR



Ed Zitron experiences victor mortis

DEVELOPER RedBedlam
PUBLISHER RedBedlam
WEBSITE
www.roma-victor.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99



AT A GLANCE...

Drab MMORPG set in Roman Britain, but without all the grand architecture, people and fun. It explains why the Romans left.

System requirements

2

HOW IT STACKS

GUILD WARS 94%

IMMORTAL CITIES:
CHILDREN OF THE NILE 77%

ROMA VICTOR 8%

YOU PROBABLY KNOW *Roma Victor* as the game that snuck its way into the press by crucifying a player earlier this year. However, like the idiot who drops his trousers in a pub, just because everybody's looking doesn't mean it's clever. *Roma Victor* is one of the most staggeringly lacklustre and awkward-to-play MMORPGs ever made.

Despite its recency, *RV* stinks graphically of *EverQuest* circa 1999. It boldly steps into the MMO business with repetitive textures, bland skies and two-dimensional sprite environs, and boasts such imaginative names for its non-player characters as 'Legionary A 3598' and 'NPC'. This would be alright in alpha or beta, but this is a game that's now on public release.

CAACK ROMANA

It wouldn't be such a problem if the game played well, but *RV* is a circus of badly thought-out ideas. For example, there are two separate modes for walking and talking, and the only way to fight anyone is to go through an entire (painfully awful) attending quest – or find the one player

per side that can de-attend you. When you finally get down to the fighting, it's a pointless real-time affair that takes a long time to get going, as you walk at the speed of rocks and can only run in short bursts before you stop dead – and it's literally miles to the enemy. Beyond fighting, there isn't much else to do bar making things, building things, gathering things or travelling.

Not that there's anything to see while you walk, as the game world is emptier than a helium balloon, with the few features being the four (tiny and bland) towns and the occasional building. What's more, when you come across a body of water, you just walk along the bottom; that's how polished this is.



It's based a good idea, but pulled off a if RedBedlam have never even played a game before. While they're not charging a monthly fee, it isn't fair to make people pay to play an incomplete game, and that's what this is. It's a boring, ugly, counter-intuitively designed waste of time. I came, I saw, I cried myself to sleep.

PCZONE

Graphics Decrepit
Sound Midi music and footsteps
Multiplayer Well, yes

- ✓ It's a good idea
- ✗ Ugly as sin
- ✗ Archaic, counter-intuitive controls
- ✗ Few real quests
- ✗ Barren vistas

08

Barbaric



Explosions continue to be an identifying feature of war.

BATTLEFIELD 2: ARMORED FURY



EA's shooter finally hits American soil

DEVELOPER EA/DICE
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.ea.com/official/battlefield/battlefield2/us
ETA Out now
PRICE \$9.99 (£6)

System requirements 3

IT TOOK SEVERAL days and several phone calls to lure *Armored Fury* from its EA servers using the hateful EA Downloader, but it took even longer to convince *Battlefield 2* that I'd actually installed the thing, and investigating the forums revealed a whole bunch of angry people having similar troubles. That's why this review is a month late.

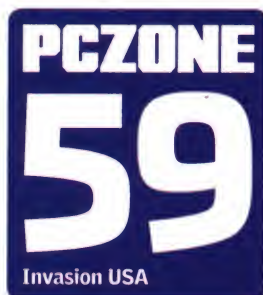
In typical *Battlefield 2* contrast though, the booster pack's content turns out to be worth the asking price (which, let's be honest, isn't really that much). Two new vehicle classes totalling six new vehicles are introduced, the most notable of which is the A-10 bomber with its distinctive plus-shaped design, and the H-6 Littlebird (that one out of *Joint Operations*), capable of spotting



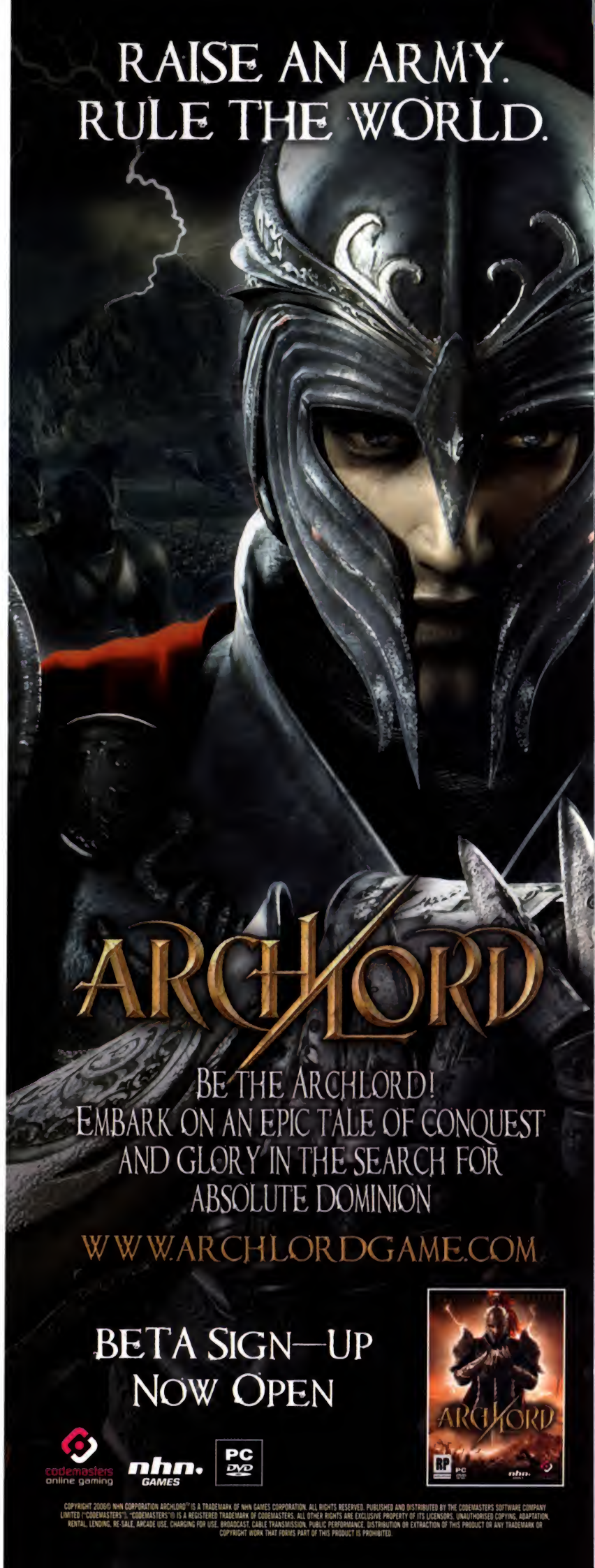
units and marking them on the map. The three maps included are brilliantly designed, with Operation Road Rage's spaghetti junction providing the best moments of the update, Operation Harvest's countryside terrain favouring any team with a competent pair of pilots to provide aerial support, and Midnight Sun's forested Alaskan suburbs making great use of the new recon helicopters. There are also two civilian vehicles available, a Mustang and a truck cab, neither of which are exceptionally useful but are nice touches nonetheless.

While still exhibiting all of the fundamental problems of these content booster packs, *Armored Fury* is a definite improvement over *Euro Force*. And that's pretty much the best plaudit I can muster.

Steve Hogarty



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You won't find any of these Indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our DVD.

Indiezone



This month *Martin Korda* went on safari, had an underground adventure and went to space twice. After that, he checked out this month's indie offerings

WILD EARTH: PHOTO SAFARI

DEVELOPER Super X Studios WEBSITE www.wildearthgame.com PRICE \$29.95 (£16)

IF YOU'VE EVER wanted to take a trip to the Serengeti but have never been able to afford it, salvation may be here. *Wild Earth* is a bizarre hybrid of FPS, exploration, education and... Photography. You play as a photojournalist sent on assignment to Africa to snap the local wildlife for a series of articles.

Played from a first-person perspective, you must wander the barren plains of Africa tracking down animals and plants and taking pictures of them. Along the way you're given bucketloads of interesting info about the indigenous wildlife.

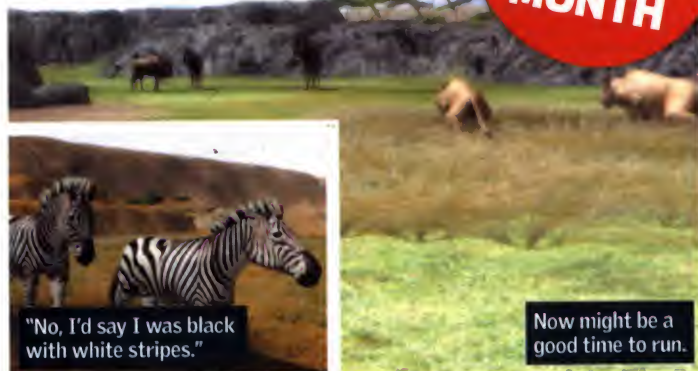
While *Wild Earth* is unlikely to test your gaming prowess, its sheer level of detail is enough to warrant

your attention. The highly impressive graphics engine does an admirable job of capturing the look and mannerisms of each species, while the desolate landscape feels rich with living creatures going about their business of eating, sleeping, nurturing their young, hunting, walking around a bit then staring aimlessly into the distance.

Throw in some well-acted (if cheesy) dialogue and an excellent African-themed soundtrack and you're left with an admirable amble across the African wilderness at a fraction of the cost of the real thing. What's more, you won't need 14 injections in your arse before you can play it either. Bonus.

PCZONE
64

Lion Stalking
22/10/07 40 needed



INDIEZONE
GAME OF THE MONTH

"No, I'd say I was black with white stripes."

Now might be a good time to run.



Lead four adventurers through the subterranean world of Avernum.

AVERNUM IV

DEVELOPER Spiderweb Software WEBSITE www.avernum.com PRICE \$24 (£13)

IF YOU'VE PLAYED any of the previous *Avernum* games, then you'll already know what to expect from this latest instalment – more of the same. If you're unfamiliar with the series, *Avernum IV* is an isometric RPG set in a subterranean world whose very existence is threatened by a sinister evil.

Visually, *Avernum IV* is less stimulating than granny porn, though beneath the ugliness is a fairly deep and accomplished adventure. Strangely, it often feels like a cross between a text adventure and a standard RPG, with endless (though fairly well-written) chunks of text breaking up the exploration and some hugely unsatisfying turn-based combat.

Despite *Avernum IV*'s solid plot and imaginative collection of creatures and spells,



there's little here to distinguish it from its predecessors and ultimately, it's impossible to recommend it – especially when you can now buy *Neverwinter Nights* for less than a tenner. Solid, but unarguably unspectacular.

PCZONE
52

CLASH 'N' SLASH: WORLDS AWAY

DEVELOPER Enkord WEBSITE www.enkord.com PRICE \$19.95 (£11)

DESPITE THEIR SIMPLICITY, frenetic 2D shooters like this one often fall into two categories. Those that try something a little different and those that rehash the old tried and tested save-your-planet-from-alien-invaders template. Sadly, this game falls into the latter grouping.

Worlds Away's mix of all-out action firefights – during which you must stop aliens, missiles and asteroids from reaching planets and stranded ships – is mildly entertaining, though the

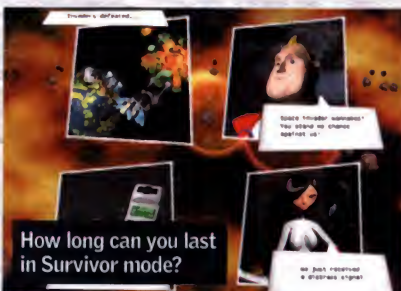
fun factor is tampered somewhat by a ludicrous difficulty curve. Throw in an irritating soundtrack with more loops than a portion of curly fries and the entertainment soon wanes.

To its credit, the upgrade system is excellent, though once you relaunch into the action, your ship's array of weapons and abilities never feels quite as satisfying as it should. Opt for *RIP Strike Back* or *Zzed* instead, I'd say.

PCZONE
43



Save your planet from alien invaders – and rocks.



How long can you last in Survivor mode?



You can't have a shooter without crates. It's the law.

DARK MATTER

DEVELOPER Big Toe Software WEB www.bigtoesoftware.com PRICE \$9.95 (£5)

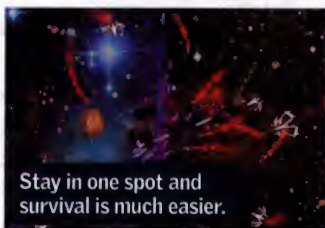


Things start to get far more interesting later on.

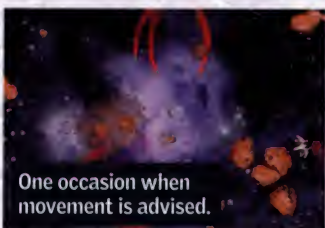
WHAT SEPARATES A good *Asteroids* clone from a poor *Asteroids* clone? Control, that's what. The problem with many games like *Dark Matter* is that all too often it's easier to remain static in the middle of the screen and spin on the spot while taking out the collection of asteroids, alien craft and space junk that's floating around you, rather than using skill to manoeuvre your craft out of trouble.

Hampered by a poor mouse control system (though there is a passable gamepad alternative), maybe it's just as well that *Dark Matter* is one of those *Asteroids* clones that can be played with economy of movement.

It's also baffling why you start each new level with the basic weapon and have no control over your upgrades whatsoever. Sure, the proceedings do get much more interesting later on,



Stay in one spot and survival is much easier.



One occasion when movement is advised.

but whether you'll have the patience or will to ever get that far is highly questionable.

PCZONE
39

Developer Q&A

MODE 7 GAMES

Name: Ian Hardingham
Job Title: Lead designer
Company: Mode 7 Games
Website: www.mode7games.com
Games: *Determinance*



PCZ Tell us about your company?

IH "We're a small independent games company from Oxford who want to make games which are fun to play, have hardcore dynamics and involve doing things you haven't been able to do in a game before."

PCZ What's the story behind *Determinance*?

IH "*Determinance* is a multiplayer swordfighting game, which has an analogue, mouse-based control-system for the sword. This enables new players to have fun swinging the sword wildly at each other, while advanced players are able to engage in much more complex duels. I always wanted to make a freeform fighting game, which was based around using geometry in a deathmatch environment. A

sword that can be employed both as an offensive weapon and as a means of defence is a great example of risk/reward."

PCZ We hear you did a beta test at Reading University for *Determinance*. How did it go?

IH "It was a big success. We got a lot of feedback about the accessibility of the game for new players, the menu systems and so on – plus the students and staff were fantastically helpful. Some people really liked the game and other people hated it, but that's exactly what we want. We're not trying to make a swordfighting simulation or a game like *Bushido Blade*. *Determinance* is an original concept, which will appeal strongly to certain kinds of gamer."

MODE 7 GAMES

BUDGET

Save your pennies for beer and curry

**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

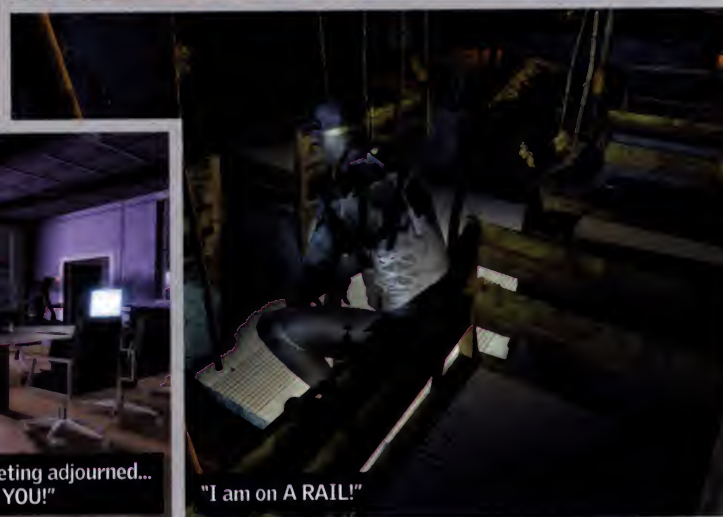
PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.splintercell.com PRICE £9.99

WITH **DOUBLE AGENT** stealthily worming its way towards us, and the new season of 24 just finishing or starting (it's hard to keep track), what better time to release the latest in the neck-snapping series at the low, low price stated above? Featuring the most famous secret spy in the industry, Sam Fisher (voted Third Echelon employee of the month twice), *Chaos Theory* is a fantastic game to both look at and play.

It's only been 18 issues since we gave the game a Classic award too, and even though we haven't seen a full-priced copy on the shelves in ages, the low, low price is still a tempting offer – especially as the game hasn't been bettered. It's still the best stealth experience around. It's also the only one we're aware of in which you can do that cool move where you pull a guy over a ledge. Everyone deserves to play this.

Steve Hogarty

**PCZONE
88**



THIS MONTH PCZONE SAVED MONEY BY...

Steve getting Suzy to buy his Red Hot Chili Peppers concert ticket:
Saving: £50

Log cancelling all of his unused MMO subscriptions:
Saving: £20 per month

A ZONE staffer getting a Thai lunch and the pub forgot to charge him:
Saving: £6



MAFIA

PUBLISHER Mastertronic WEBSITE www.mafia-game.com PRICE £4.99

STILL THE BEST GTA clone based on the Mafia, and still the best Mafia game outright, no game is as deserving of the title 'Mafia' as *Mafia*. The driving sections were awkward and clunky which might be attributed to the fact that cars at the time were awkward and clunky, and some missions were horribly unforgiving with cruelly placed checkpoints and spiking difficulty.

Everything else though, like the scripting, the plot, the style, the characters, the shootouts and the locations, and the set-pieces, oh, and the humour. And the action. That stuff is all excellent, almost perfect and carried off with such a sense of Hollywood authority that you'll be overcome with satisfaction from start to finish. It's got great era-specific music too, and the old cliché of being in a 'living, breathing

city' is alive and well. For five pounds, this is an essential piece of PC gaming history worth owning. So what if that sounds like an infomercial? It's still true.

Steve Hogarty

**PCZONE
84**



PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.kingkonggame.com PRICE £9.99

MOVIE TIE-IN GAMES are usually shite – as sure as there are Hollywood blockbusters, you can be sure that there'll be cynical cash-in releases hovering around like flies round popcorn vomit. However, *King Kong* is a notable exception, having been developed by Michel 'Beyond Good & Evil' Ancel after being hand-picked to make it by Kiwi film-making legend Peter Jackson himself.

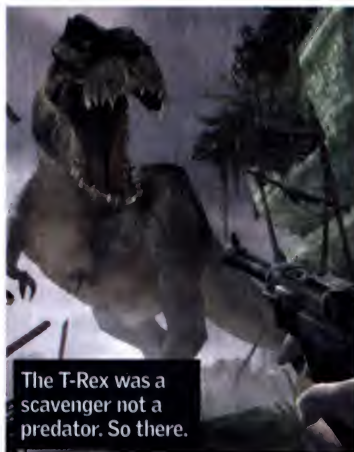
King Kong loosely follows the plot of the movie, and throws you into the action on Skull Island in first-person mode as screenwriter Jack Driscoll, as you and your compadres use conventional

guns and improvised weapons such as spears to desperately fend off ever-larger prehistoric predators – including frightening T-Rex-attack sequences.

However, the highlight is when you control Kong, a hulking psychopathic ape who can deftly leap around the jungle as well as pulverise enemies in truly brutal animalistic fights to the death. Great visuals, atmosphere, memorable voice-acting (by the cast no-less) and wonderful set-pieces make *Peter Jackson's King Kong* a steal at this price.

Jamie Sefton

PCZONE
85



The T-Rex was a scavenger not a predator. So there.

MYST V: END OF AGES

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.mystvgame.com PRICE £9.99

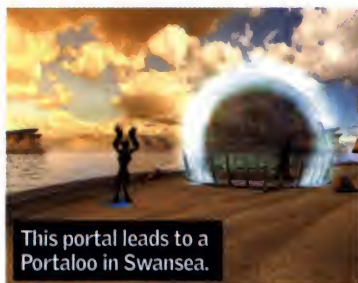
IF YOU HAD to liken games to schoolchildren, then while the *Doom* series would be a set of bullying brothers running around twatting people round the head with their plastic BFGs, the *Myst* series would be that nerdy set of siblings that everyone takes the piss out of. In fact, here at ZONE, we take the mickey out of it so much that sometimes we completely forget how good the series actually is.

But despite our ribbing, the hugely popular series has a massive following and this, the fifth and final addition, features gorgeous graphics, true 3D to replace the slideshow graphics of old, a well-told storyline and the series' forte:

thoughtful, contextual puzzles. If you fancy exercising your brain rather than your trigger finger, it's a tenner well spent.

Suzy Wallace

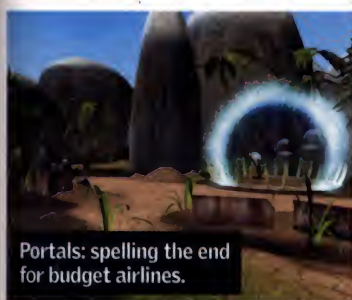
PCZONE
83



This portal leads to a Portaloos in Swansea.



What's around the corner? Play to find out!



Portals: spelling the end for budget airlines.

And the rest...

Old games + cheap prices = budget heaven (or hell)



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

£4.99, MASTERTRONIC

Although it's getting on a bit, *NWN* not only offers great character creation and excellent multiplayer but also one of the most modifiable engines of recent times, with thousands of user-created quests to keep your bargain buy going.

PCZONE
78



TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

£4.99, MASTERTRONIC

Codemasters' mega-mix of motorsport is a testament to what can be achieved when you cram 15 disciplines of racing, 52 tracks, the excellent Terminal Damage model and a Scotsman with attitude into a mass of automotive goodness.

PCZONE
74



LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

£4.99, MASTERTRONIC

Vampiric violence abounds in this last outing of the *Soul Reaver* series. Despite some disappointing puzzles and level design, the brilliant combo-based combat and seriously cool telekinetic powers are a blast.

PCZONE
70

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1 FAR CRY

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

Better than *HL2*? So some say. The best non-gravity gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI.



2 BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

£9.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

Glorious story-telling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in gaming-dom make *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



3 THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

£9.99, BESTSELLER

Great melee, sneaky stealth and oodles of lawless violence – not all console conversions are a pile of old poo.



4 MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR - GOLD EDITION

£9.99, MASTERTRONIC

A true classic, *Medieval* lets troops do battle in real-time and lets you get tactical in this warfare masterpiece.



5 WARHAMMER 40K: DAWN OF WAR

£9.99, FOCUS MULTIMEDIA

Even if you've never heard of the Games Workshop franchise, this *Command & Conquer*-style RTS is great-looking and explosive fun.

BUYER'S GUIDE



The bestest games your money can buy...

PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES BEGINNING WITH 'D'

- 1 **DEUS EX**
PCZ ISSUE: 93
- 2 **DOOM**
PCZ ISSUE: 13
- 3 **DUNGEON KEEPER**
PCZ ISSUE: 53
- 4 **DARK FORCES**
PCZ ISSUE: 24
- 5 **DISCWORLD**
PCZ ISSUE: 22

PCZONE TOP 5 GOOD DOGS

- 1 **SAM (SAM & MAX)**
PCZ ISSUE: 11
- 2 **DOG (HL2)**
PCZ ISSUE: 148
- 3 **DOGMEAT (FALLOUT)**
PCZ ISSUE: 61
- 4 **WOOF (BEYOND GOOD & EVIL)**
PCZ ISSUE: 138
- 5 **ROBOTIC POODLE (NOLF 2)**
PCZ ISSUE: 122

PCZONE TOP 5 BAD DOGS

- 1 **ATTACK DOG (WOLFENSTEIN 3D)**
PCZ ISSUE: N/A
- 2 **ZOMBIE DOG (RESIDENT EVIL SERIES)**
PCZ ISSUE: 94
- 3 **HOWLER (CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING)**
PCZ ISSUE: 101
- 4 **GUARD DOGS (OBLIVION)**
PCZ ISSUE: 167
- 5 **MUTANT ALIEN DOGS (PREY)**
PCZ ISSUE: 170



Shooters

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.



BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.



FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



HL2: EPISODE ONE
PCZ Issue: 170 - 91%

Suffering slightly from thematic overlap from *HL2*, *Ep One* nevertheless contains the greatest moments from the entire *HL* series. Warm, funny and thrilling, it may be short, but the first five minutes are worth the entry fee alone.



CALL OF DUTY 2
PCZ Issue: 162 - 91%

Brutal, relentless and totally gripping, the WWII shooter sequel packs more action into a single level than most pack into an entire game. Epic scale battles and intense drama. *World War II* at its unforgiving best.



F.E.A.R.
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%

With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Revenge* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



PREY
PCZ Issue: 170 - 86%

Prey hits the PC after an 11-year wait and proves to be a filthy-gorgeous organic sci-fi shooter with fantastic weapons, scenery and monsters. Not the best combat, but stuffed full of original ideas.

Strategy

Must buy!



ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



CIVILIZATION IV
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%

A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry, sorry place, and luckily the latest version does the business with aplomb. Violent Buddhist Romans take over the world.



RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
PCZ Issue: 168 - 91%

Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and *Total War* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation and imagination.



LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



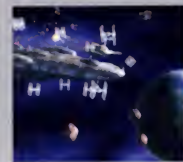
SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the 'last generation' of empire-builders, *Rise of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones and Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.



STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR
PCZ Issue 166 - 86%

A brilliant real-time tactical map and amazing space conflicts makes *Empire At War* the best *Star Wars* RTS ever. It's only let down by its land battles - otherwise, it's beyond reproach.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue 154 - 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES
PCZ Issue: 164 - 86%

The shirtless wonder finally makes it into the Buyer's Guide, not that any of his outings can be considered bad games. *TTT* manages to get all the ingredients just right this time.

MMOs



Must buy!

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



EVERQUEST II

PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A *Star Trek* to *WOW's* *Star Wars*. *EQII* gives the original a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



GUILD WARS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EYE ONLINE

PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



CITY OF HEROES

PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Simulation



Must buy!

X3: REUNION

PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Plus, it plays well too.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



BUDGET

FREELANCER

PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



FALCON 4.0

PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dated series, *Falcon 4.0* lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

Driving/Racing



Must buy!

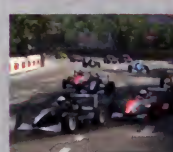
GT LEGENDS

PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends* does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



GTR

PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, shunting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



LIVE FOR SPEED

PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

PCZ Issue: 163 - 88%
Thrill-packed racer from EA, this time with the emphasis on high-speed police chases and notoriety factors. You can still make like Westwood with the car pimping though.



TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

PCZ Issue: 165 - 85%
If you're into cars, this is about as essential as petrol. With a massive collection of 35 motorsport genres, a great damage engine and realistic tracks, there's plenty of mileage in this superb racer.

God games



Must buy!

THE MOVIES

PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%
Life as a movie mogul, games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



BLACK & WHITE 2

PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



BUDGET

BLACK & WHITE

PCZ Issue: 150 - 90%
Lionhead's controversial vision brought out your good/bad side and featured an ambitious mix of role-playing, strategy and great AI. It can now be yours for a mere fiver, making it a god among mortals.



EVIL GENIUS

PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say 'No Mr Bond, I expect you to die', or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.

Sport



Must buy!

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful game. Not only the best version of *Pro Evo* ever, also the best footy game ever.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006

PCZ Issue: 162 - 90%
One year on and the best footy management game is even better. Quick Tactics, half-time team talks, physio reports - changes are small but add up to a terrific whole.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. *Tiger 06* is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



NHL 06

PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent balls-out fun for the whole family.



MADDEN 2005

PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.

RPGs



Must buy!

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

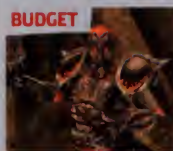
PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freedom gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



BUDGET

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



BUDGET

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



DEUS EX

PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freedom levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain *Deus Ex* as the alpha male of the gaming world.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%
It may not have the depth of *Fallout*, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

August & September

ARCHLORD
BROKEN SWORD: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS
CALL OF JUAREZ
CIVICITY: ROME
COMPANY OF HEROES
DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC
DEFCON
DUNGEON SIEGE 2: BROKEN WORLD
FACES OF WAR
GOTHIC 3
GTR 2
LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY
RESIDENT EVIL 4
SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT
WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS
WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - DARK CRUSADE

CODEMASTERS
THQ
93 GAMES
2K GAMES
THQ
UBISOFT
INTROVERSION
2K GAMES
UBISOFT
JOWOOD
ATARI
ACTIVISION
UBISOFT
UBISOFT
DEEP SILVER
THQ

Late 2006

BATTLEFIELD 2142
BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY
F.E.A.R.: EXTRACTION POINT
FOOTBALL MANAGER 2007
HELLGATE: LONDON
JUST CAUSE
MEDIAEVIL 2: TOTAL WAR
NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE
SAM & MAX
SPORE
STAR TREK: LEGACY
STRONGHOLD LEGENDS
THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE: SHADOWS OF ANGMAR
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

EA
EIDOS
VU GAMES
SEGA
NAMCO
EIDOS
SEGA
EA
ATARI
SEGA
TELLTALE GAMES
EA
BETHESDA
2K GAMES
CODEMASTERS
VU GAMES

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SALE
NOW!**

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- ➔ MotoGP 3
- ➔ Forza Motorsport
- ➔ Colin McRae Rally 04
- ➔ TOCA Race Driver 3



System addict

IF I WERE BUILDING the basics of a Core 2 Duo system, what would I use? At the value end of the scale, I'd pick the Asrock ConroeXFire-SATA2 because it's a full-featured motherboard for less than £65. Pair this with a Core 2 Duo E6300 for £135 and with 1GB of Crucial DDR2 PC2-5300 RAM for around £70. That's a total of just £270 for a machine that'll blow the socks off high-end rigs which cost thousands not six months ago.

For the middle ground, I'd go for my Buyer's Guide favourite Intel D975XBX for about £150. It's not the most exciting board ever made, but then that's what I like about it. You do get CrossFire support, decent audio and a smattering of overclocking features most people will never use anyway. Go for the Core 2 Duo E6700 for £400 with 2GB of OCZ DDR2 PC2-5300 RAM for £135. That's a grand total of £685, but you could easily drop 1GB from the RAM to save yourself £65 or ditch the Intel mobo in favour of the budget-minded Asrock for £85 back in your pocket. Just make sure you keep that E6700.

At the top end, you'll be wanting the Core 2 Extreme X6800 for around £800, with a board and memory capable of exploiting its potential. Go for the £180 ASUS P5W-DH Deluxe with 2GB of OCZ PC2-8000 Platinum Extreme Edition memory for £350. That's a lot of money but a crap load of performance.

Wand

Phil Wand, hardware editor

NAME THAT ZUNE



New Microsoft brand hopes to kick Apple's 70% market share where it hurts



MICROSOFT HAS FINALLY admitted to developing its own iPod, and announced a whole range of hardware and software products focused on music and entertainment due later this year.

The first player to be marketed under the company's new Zune brand will most likely feature a hard drive plus Wi-Fi, allowing users to download and store movies or music without needing to synchronise the device with a PC or Macintosh. Zune owners will also be able to share the content they have with Windows Mobile Edition, Media Center Edition and Xbox users, as well as connect to the Internet and upload to blogs.

There's also talk of the player doubling as a DS- and PSP-rivalling gaming handheld, able to run Flash titles and

Zune is Microsoft's new music and entertainment brand.

provide casual gamers with access to the huge numbers of 'ten-minute games' you find everywhere online these days.

And just think: adding features such as a Skype functionality to a device such as this isn't beyond the limits of its technology. iPod is about to look very old. www.comingzune.com

NEWS ROUND-UP

BSkyB stunned nobody with its introduction of broadband services late last month. The company bought Easynet for £211m in 2005, and it was only a matter of time before it was following TalkTalk, Virgin, Orange and numerous others in offering customers a 'free' Internet connection in return for wet ink on the bottom of new 12-month contracts. Bear in mind that as a Sky subscriber you'll still have to pay a connection fee, and that for higher access speeds – assuming your line can handle them, of course – you'll be paying £10 a month. www.sky.com

Belkin, Netgear and a number of others are lining up Skype Wi-Fi handsets: in essence, mobile phones which dial out wirelessly over a secured or open-access Internet connection. The most important thing is that no computer is required. Netgear announced their Skype-certified device a couple of months back, and Belkin's new phone emulates the program's familiar interface on a colour LCD. This is, of course, a great idea, but the way BT has been screwing endlessly with my broadband line just recently, I'll be keeping my landline for emergency calls. www.skype.com

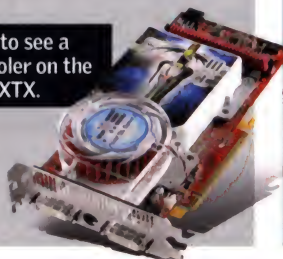
SLAVERY ABOLISHED
Radeon X1950 CrossFire Edition to end

OUR BUYER'S GUIDE favourite Radeon is about to go much faster in the form of the X1950 XTX and X1950 CrossFire Edition cards.

For the first time, both cards will have the same clock speeds. They'll use GDDR-4 memory and should be up to 10% faster than their predecessor. It's also the last time you'll see a CrossFire Edition card, as the new R600-based hardware has no need for separate 'master' and 'slave' card devices. Remember me saying that the concept of

CrossFire was difficult for most users to grasp, and what it lacked was the simplicity of SLI? The answer is due here this Christmas. Check out www.ati.com.

Expect to see a new cooler on the X1950 XTX.



WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

POWEREDGE: One-handed sword, binds when picked up, 85-129 damage (59.4 damage per second), +7 Stamina, requires Level 60. **VIDEO MEMORY:** Forgetting to bring *Total Recall* back to Blockbusters and incurring late fees and a permanent black mark on your membership record. **UBUNTU LINUX:** An operating system used primarily in the Congo. **HOMEPLUG:** A series of seven extension cables connecting every appliance in your house to a socket belonging to that twat next-door. **ZUNE:** A really silly name for an MP3 player, not as bad as calling a juice drink AdeZ though. **EASYNET:** Replaced the Difficultnet in 1985, thus revolutionising the fishing industry.



GIGAWORKS G550W WIRELESS

PRICE £210 MANUFACTURER Creative WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

AS WITH LOGITECH'S Z-5500s, Creative's G550Ws leave you wondering how it's possible for your eyes and ears to have better sex at even twice the price. Not only do they look good and sound good, but the two rear channels help reduce clutter by connecting to a separately powered wireless receiver.

In essence, Creative have taken their £175 ProGamer G500 speakers and shifted two channels to a standalone relay station anywhere behind you. While not a true wireless set-up – there are in fact more wires to contend with than in the G500 – it does cut down on the annoying festoonery of cables that you would normally string across the carpet and tuck under a skirting board.

They're also plenty loud enough. Despite a power rating some way behind

competitors, the G550Ws are still capable of raising your adrenalin levels and giving you a headache. While they don't have the power to reshape your face the way the MegaWorks 550s do, when you're hunkered down only a few inches from the sound, it's not like you need foghorn-rivalling levels of volume to achieve the desired effect.

PROFOUND BASS

Where we gamers like a bit of clout is in the nether regions. We like our buttocks to clench when we're being shelled by artillery, and we want that passing C-130 Hercules to sound like it has four Rolls-Royce turboprops rather than 44 bluebottles. Gratifyingly, the G550W sub is larger than a mausoleum and has enough clout to make the wipers on your neighbour's car bounce up and down on the glass. It produces enough bass to stoke any game – or indeed

any movie or music track – with new-found drama. It is truly satan's own woofer.

The one thing that counts against the Creative speakers is the lack of any onboard Dolby Digital/DTS decoding, making them next to pointless when plugged into anything but a PC. Considering that the Z-5500 rivals manage to include true 5.1 functionality for the same price, the G550Ws must miss out on a coveted slot in our Buyer's Guide. They're good, but not the best.

And then we come back to the fact that they're not actually wireless. Each speaker is connected by a length of wire either to the sub or to the rear wireless receiver, meaning that your PC's sound gear is still going to be the messiest thing in your room next to the pile of crispy Kleenex in your wastebasket.

Trouble is, the technology required to transmit electricity through the air doesn't

SPECIFICATION

Configuration 5.1 THX-certified Main Speakers 36W RMS Subwoofer 130W RMS Frequency Response 35Hz – 20kHz Signal To Noise Ratio 85dB Warranty 24 months

actually exist. You could have a separate wireless receiver integrated into the speaker units, but together with an amplifier they'd become impractically large and you'd then be faced with the problem of having to power each one individually. So shut up. This is as good as it gets. **PCZ**



PL-100 TWIN PACK 85MBPS

PRICE £88 MANUFACTURER ZyXEL WEBSITE www.zyxel.co.uk

THIS ISN'T THE first time I've looked at a HomePlug-certified device which allows you to turn your home's 240V power sockets into a network. But it is the first time a device has worked exactly as advertised, at a decent speed and with true plug-and-play simplicity.

Crucially, the PL-100s require no drivers. Many older products such as Packard Bell's obsolete net2plug (yours on eBay for under a fiver) were USB-based and required that you installed software on every PC to which you connected them. The ZyXEL solution is more like a switch or a hub, in that all you need is power and an Ethernet cable.

At home, I have cables running under floorboards and down wall cavities so that

the network is present in every room. With the PL-100s, none of this would have been necessary: put one near your router, and dot any number of additional units where you need them. Encryption keeps your files safe from neighbours.

The advertised bandwidth of 85Mbps not only exceeds the 54Mbps of 802.11g wireless, but is also a more predictable rate of transfer; there are no lumps and bumps in data delivery nor dropped connections to contend with. My only concern is that the PL-100s are desktop products, like mini routers, whereas rivals in the same price bracket (eg Devolo dLAN, Dynamode Homeplug-E) are self-contained units which connect directly to the socket and are thus less obtrusive.



PCZONE

VALUE • PERFORMANCE



86



NOVIBES III

PRICE £20 MANUFACTURER A Conto NoiseMagic WEBSITE chillblast.co.uk

THE NOVIBES IS an old product from German company NoiseMagic, but with noise suppression now becoming just as important an issue as cooling, it's worth taking another look.

Unlike a number of lesser rivals, it features an 'open cage' design and thus won't oven-cook your hard drive. By suspending any 3.5-inch unit in what can only be described as a rubber truss, not only does it eliminate most drive chirp and clatter, it also gives you far better airflow.

Everything about the NoVibes is high-grade. The metal has an agricultural quality to it, the rubber straps feel like you could nail them to a door frame and swing from them, and there are four mounting screws and detailed instructions included in the package.

In an already noisy PC, the NoVibes won't make any audible improvement. But if you're looking to build something silent, it's a very sensible choice.

PCZONE

VALUE • PERFORMANCE



80

INSPIRE T6060

PRICE £50 MANUFACTURER Creative WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

WITH OUR FAVOURITE Inspire P5800s relegated to limited availability as budget-buy OEM gear, it's time for me to look at their replacement – the T6060s.

Construction is a degree flimsier than any predecessor, and although it's probably just a sign of my age, I'm not a fan of the way Creative is modelling its speakers on ice cream products. The I-Trigue L3800s reviewed a few issues back look like Maltesers lollies, and the T6060s here look like half-sucked Walls Soleros. I guess I just prefer audio products to be heard and not seen.

Of course, none of this really matters. A speaker set-up should make your favourite games, movies and music come to life, and here the T6060s don't disappoint. They have plenty of volume, plenty of depth – despite a low-powered sub – and the surround effects are excellent. All in all, the T6060s are a good mid-range buy. But I'll keep my P5800s.

SPECIFICATION

Configuration 5.1 Main Speakers 8W RMS (18W Centre) Subwoofer 22W RMS Frequency Response 40Hz - 20kHz Signal To Noise Ratio 80dB Warranty 24 months



PCZONE

VALUE • PERFORMANCE



79

HOW TO...

KEEP YOUR PC COOL

Need:

Air duster

Time:

One hour

Difficulty level:

Phil Wand

HAL 9000

Medium doofus

Big Brother contestant

← Jamie Sefton

Are hot days turning your PC into an asthmatic mess? *Phil Wand* looks at things you can do to keep your rig cool

IF YOU'VE SAT in your room on a hot day and wondered why the computer under your desk is huffing and puffing like a fan-assisted oven, it's because you could cook a pie and chips inside the poor thing. You need to take a look at ways to cool it down.

Heat is generated by power flowing through the tiny circuits inside your computer's hardware components, turning them into miniature bathroom heaters. And heat

is what would kill these components in the event that the air stopped moving around them.

Many of you will know that a hot PC is a noisy PC – fans get faster when the temperature gets higher, and on sunny days you can't even hear yourself think. With the temperature too high, things get a little shaky, a little less reliable and, in extreme cases, shorter lived. Read on to find out what you can do about it.

01 Give your PC some space

The first thing to do is drag your PC a good 2ft away from nearby walls, making sure you don't stretch or snag cables. The exhaust fans at the rear aren't going to have an impact on your overall system temperature if all they're doing is blasting air into a pool of heat behind the case, so it needs room to breathe properly. Make sure your PC isn't backing onto curtains or other heat-absorbent materials, and that there are no objects obstructing airflow. Never cover your case and never stack external hard drives or odds and sods on top of it. Such things will either generate or store heat.



Having stuff on top of and around your PC is not advisable.



02 Give your case a going over

Once you've found a sweet spot for your system, unplug it and put it on your desk. Brush and then vacuum where it stood to prevent dust and pet hairs from being sucked straight back into your case when you plug it back in. Get two short blocks of wood and lay them across the area – raising your case off the ground improves airflow and stops the

build-up of crap and carpets getting stained. Now open your system and, using a can of compressed air, blow all the shit out of the nooks and crannies inside your case. If you resort to a domestic vacuum cleaner, use a plastic nozzle and be VERY CAREFUL not to knock the capacitors on your motherboard. Because then it won't work.



If you have an older PC, think about **upgrading your PSU**. It's quite likely that your old dinosaur will be **relying heavily on airflow through the power supply**, and a more modern unit will do a **significantly better job** at chucking out heat. An increasing number of modern supplies have slow-spinning **120mm fans** which are **quieter** but give the **same throughput of air**. The **Zalman ZM-2HC2** is an elegant-looking hard drive enclosure which not only cuts noise, but cuts temperature too. You can buy one from **quietpc.com**, **chillblast.com** and **scan.co.uk**. You can download **SpeedFan** from **www.almico.com** and **Hmonitor** from **www.hmonitor.com**. Bear in mind that utilities such as these **require that your motherboard has sensors** which dispense information about your system.

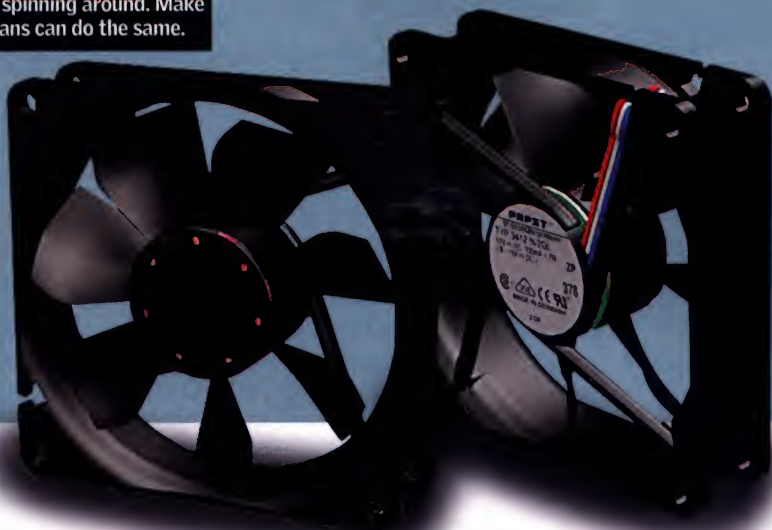
WARNING: PUT A LID ON IT!

You might think that taking the top layer off your PC on a hot day will help it cool down. In fact, the opposite is true. Modern systems rely on air constantly moving in channels through the case. Typically, cool air is routed in through a filtered grille at the front of the case, where it's directed over the motherboard and peripherals, and then exhausted out the back. If you remove the lid, the air will no longer be channelled through your PC and most of the hardware will be left sweltering in static air. So leave the lid on!

03 Spin city

With the PC still open on your desk, connect the power lead and fire her up. Eyeball all the fans inside the case: the one over your processor, the one on your video card and any others that may be attached to your motherboard and various add-in cards (eg AGEIA PhysX). They all need to spin freely and not buzz alarmingly when started, otherwise they either need cleaning with the air duster, oiling with sewing machine oil or, better still, replacing with a decent Papst fan. When checking coolers, bear in mind that many will be controlled by the system and may not be running at maximum power the whole time.

Kylie loves spinning around. Make sure your fans can do the same.



04 Get shot of stuff you don't need

Unless your case features exceptional cooling features and the room in which it stands is well ventilated, you should avoid products such as HDD silencers. These metal enclosures are designed to eliminate the noise of a busy hard disk, but they have a detrimental effect on the unit's temperature. If you have such a silencer, make sure you add a cooler nearby to ensure that any heat build-up is shifted elsewhere, or consider replacing it with a combined silencer/cooler such as Zalman's ZM-2HC2 (right).



Zalman's ZM-2HC2 combined silencer/cooler will help your PC keep cool.

QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

Got something you want to ask? Just want something else to read? Read on...

✗ Is heat that important?

✓ Heat makes your PC slow and unstable and causes components and hard drives to die. If you were to disconnect your fans, your computer would stop working in minutes.

✗ I don't want to mess about inside my PC...

✓ Then ensure your room is both cool and airy. Buy an air conditioner from B&Q, or get a unit installed permanently.

✗ What about those add-in blower cards?

✓ If you have a high-end video card, a blower can have a dramatic effect on your system temperature when slotted alongside it. But they're real noisy.

✗ Where do Pacific walrus spend the summer?

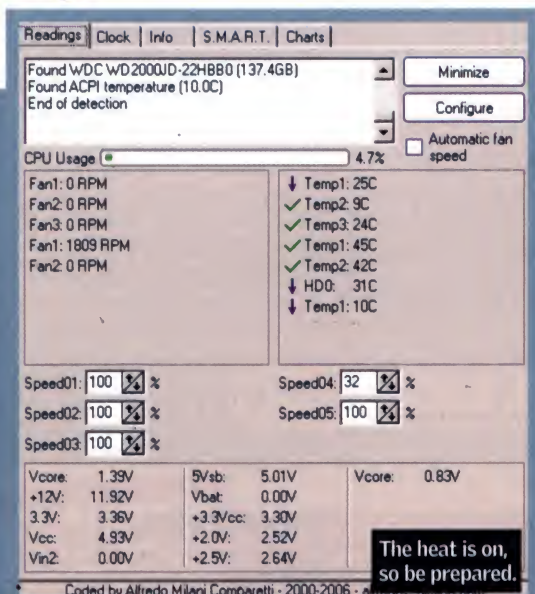
✓ North of the Bering Strait.

✗ What's an ideal temperature for an air-cooled CPU?

✓ It varies, but generally a temperature between 45-65 degrees is acceptable. An ideal temperature is below zero!

05 Keep an eye on things

Once your machine is back on the floor and plumbed in, make sure you keep a close eye on its temperature. Most modern motherboards, video cards and hard disks from well-known manufacturers will include special sensors to help you do just this. Check their website or your motherboard manual for details of a hardware monitoring utility, or download a third-party product such as SpeedFan or Hmonit to keep an eye on things for you. If the temperature climbs too high, consider buying a desktop fan and directing its airflow along the side of your case, towards the rear.





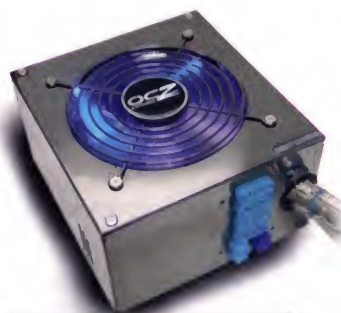
DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning with a kebab and beer can stuck to your face? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.



The £50 OCZ ModStream 450W will give 7800 GS owners all the juice they need.

DRIVER WATCH

Keep your PC happy

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 6.6	4 JUN 06
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 91.31	23 JUN 06

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	SOUND BLASTER X-FI 2.09.0001	3 JUL 05
Creative	AUDIGY, AUDIGY2	24 JAN 06
	4.2.08.0004	

DULL AND FADED

Q According to Belarc, my system is a Fujitsu-Siemens D1625 with a 3.0GHz Pentium 4 and 1.5GB RAM on-board. I've recently splashed out on a new Gainward GeForce 7800 GS to fit into my AGP slot, but after installing the card, the Windows XP loading screen appeared dull and faded and the progress bar wouldn't move – I had to turn it off and on again. The problem became worse when the computer was warm and, assuming it was the new GPU, I contacted ebuyer.com who agreed to have it back. But having reinstalled my old Radeon, that now does the same thing. I've taken out my old processor cooler and fitted a new Akasa Black Knight plus two exhaust fans, yet these haven't cured the problem. I was wondering if you could suggest the most likely cause before I spend any more money blundering my way though other things?

Lee Gardner

A The 7800 GS is a magnificent card for people still using the still magnificent AGP (ie most of us), but it does have some pretty hefty power requirements. Gainward suggests a minimum 400W PSU with the 12V rail capable of 20A – in other words, something no Fujitsu-Siemens system has. And when you consider that the vast majority of 7800 GS hopefuls will be owners of slightly older systems with slightly older power supply units, I'd not be surprised if most buyers experience stability problems such as the one you describe.

Mind you, the GPU's thirst for energy doesn't explain why your system is exhibiting the precise same symptoms with your old Radeon back in the saddle. I would be inclined to start Windows in Safe Mode and uninstall all video-related entries from the Add/Remove Programs list, because in changing from ATI to NVIDIA, you may have inadvertently left some old crap hanging about. I would also make sure that your BIOS is up-to-date: Google for the D1625 motherboard and you'll find that the Fujitsu-Siemens website has a number of downloads available.

RESCUE HOME

Q I've recently been given two servers by a friend whose company has



Nice computer mister!
Did you find it in a skip?

upgraded their back office systems. The first is a Dell PowerEdge 2600. It has a Xeon 1800MHz processor with 1GB RAM, 8MB SDRAM Video Memory (I presume on-board RAM sharing), plus 6 x SCSI Disks in RAID: that's 3 x 18GB Maxtors and 3 x 146GB Hitachis. The second is an IBM xSeries 200. It has an Intel Celeron 733MHz processor, 1GB RAM, 16MB Video Memory and 2 x 20GB IDE disks. Both machines have Windows Server 2003 stickers and licence codes on them.

I promised I wasn't going to sell them on as they were going to be destroyed unless I had them. They don't seem like particularly powerful machines to me and I'm at a bit of a loss as to what to do with them. Being a man of great technical prowess, is there something you'd do with them in my position? Something interesting, cunning even? It'd be a shame to take them down the tip. Is the Xeon processor in the Dell machine any good by today's standards?

Chris Darby

A If the systems you've been gifted were used to run mission-critical systems at a business, there's a high chance they'll have mission-critical files on them.

Which is why companies crush their hardware and toss it into skips rather than auction it and have smart-arses breaking into their network using data they resurrected from its hard drives.

My advice would be to give the HDDs back straight away and have the company dispose of them at their leisure. Then stick what's left on eBay. The technology you describe is irrelevant to home users and will simply gather dust on a shelf in your garage while you try and work out what to do with it. You could, as a friend of mine has done, use the array in the PowerEdge for centralised network storage of music and movies. You could fill it with soil and grow household plants in it. You could film yourself setting fire to it and then upload it to YouTube, where your ego will be stroked by children leaving comments such as "awsom" and "dude u rock". You could install Ubuntu Linux on it and learn a proper operating system. Or you could turn them into money and buy something you may actually use.

RIGHT TRICK

Q I've had a problem with the past few installs of Windows XP where, all of a sudden, I can't maximise windows from the

@ wandy@dearwandy.com

dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

"You could grow house plants in it, or you could film yourself setting fire to it and upload it to YouTube"

And don't expect it to run *Prey* either, Chris Darby

taskbar. Right now for example, I have an IE window open and MSN Messenger. When someone's talking to me, I have to Alt+Tab to be able to view anything instead of simply clicking on it in the taskbar. If I try to right-click on the taskbar, the menu is missing. I haven't installed anything since my last boot and now it just won't function properly. It's obviously very annoying, but I haven't been able to find anything out on the Net and the Microsoft site has been of no help. If you could fix this then I would consider you a god for eternity.

Lee Glover

A Sounds like you or an application you've installed has modified the Windows Registry. If you're using something horrid like WindowBlinds, or any other interface tweaking tool, I'd not be surprised if you run into odd behaviour now and then. The fact it keeps happening – I've never once seen the symptoms you describe – means it's something you're doing rather than something intrinsically wrong with Windows. Your best bet would be to Google for 'taskbar repair tool' and use that to rectify any issues you're having.

CRACKING UP

Q My Windows XP Professional CD has a crack in it and is useless. I rang Microsoft for a replacement, but they said because it's an OEM disc, I need to contact the supplier of my PC instead. Problem is, Special Reserve is no more. Is there anything I can do apart from buy a new copy?

Graham Anderson

A The problem here is that Mr Gates views OEM copies of his products as the responsibility of the manufacturer, not Microsoft. For example, if the fuel pump in your car failed, would you take it back to the dealer or to Robert Bosch in Germany?

I'd give Microsoft another call and explain your predicament, and if they still refuse to help you have two options. The first is to buy another full copy of Windows, which is annoying not only because it's going to cost at least £100, but also because it will soon be superseded by Vista. The second is to borrow a CD from a friend and make a backup copy of it. If you still have the sticker on the side of your PC, there's no legal comeback: that's proof you have a valid licence and it entitles you to use the software, regardless of origin. **PCW**

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE



Internet Explorer 7 may end up better. Right now though, Firefox is best.

14 MOZILLA FIREFOX

COSTS FREE

getfirefox.com

Were it not for the fact I've mentioned Mozilla's open-source browser several thousand times this last year alone, it would have been number one on my list: after Windows, Firefox is the first thing I install on every new PC. And I'm not alone. In the last 18 months, the setup program has been downloaded 150 million times and it's estimated that 13% of all surfers now use the software.

And it's not about being anti-Microsoft. We're all Windows people here, and most of us are proud of that; ditching Internet Explorer is a meaningless gesture given that it's not only free but is also part of Windows itself. You may as well quit using your taskbar.

No, switching to Firefox

is about supporting open standards, blocking pop-up adverts, browsing in tabs and relative safety from malware. There are numerous other features – for example, live bookmarks and the JavaScript console, which is an invaluable tool for Web developers – without which Firefox veterans would be lost.

Firefox also has a wide array of plug-ins known as Extensions. It's up to you what you use, but my preference is for Adblock Plus (to remove adverts inside Web pages), Tab Mix Plus (to customise and improve the program's tab-based interface) and CustomizeGoogle (to remove unwanted results). Together with Firefox's standard security features, these are all you need to make browsing a very safe and pleasurable experience.

If you want your PC to look like a Mac, WindowBlinds will feed your madness.



FORUMS:

DIRECT FROM
DEARWANDY.COM

Q: I use a download manager. When I use it with Internet Explorer, I have a right-click menu allowing me to choose to download with GetRight. I use Firefox now, and I don't get the same option. Can I fix this? **A:** You need the FlashGot Extension from flashgot.net. This allows Firefox to talk with FlashGet, Fresh Download, GetRight, GigaGet, HiDownload, iGetter, InstantGet, Internet Download Accelerator, Internet Download Manager, LeechGet, Mass Downloader, Net Transport, ReGet, Star Downloader, TrueDownloader, WellGet, plus other programs I won't let near my PC because the help files are in Russian.



Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

WATCHDOG

Not all companies are bad – but if they are, write to us for help...

BOOTED UP THE BIOS

Spring cleaning's not just limited to old biddies who have finished their crosswords and knitting and now have nothing better to do; any self-respecting PC owner knows that the old box of gadgets needs looking after too. So when Gary Kirby saw that there was a critical BIOS update for his HP computer, he did what he thought was the right thing and installed it. However, he soon realised his folly, as straight afterwards, his PC refused to even boot up into Windows. Despite getting straight on the phone to HP's tech support, the advice given didn't help Gary to get his PC working again. He's since sent out several further emails to HP without receiving any reply, and so has been left wondering if his PC is now only good for the scrapheap...

Despite Gary's problems, we were quietly confident that we'd be able to get a swift response from HP – but we were wrong.

After a few weeks of play, John Austin noticed that his video card was reaching temperatures of 70 degrees

Despite sending over the complaint promptly, we didn't manage to elicit a response from HP for two months. Barely minutes away from being written up as an 'In The Doghouse' non-replying company, HP got in contact to say that: "Gary Kirby's problem with his machine has now been resolved. Mr Kirby has now purchased a new HP machine, and HP have offered to buy back the base unit of his previous machine. Mr Kirby has agreed, and is emailing us his proof of purchase so he can be reimbursed." I guess Gary won't be in a hurry to update his BIOS again, though.

IT'S HOT IN HERE

It's summertime, but not everyone's a fan of the heat – especially when it comes to the smooth running of computers. Having purchased a 512MB Sapphire X1600 Pro card from Overclockers.co.uk and enjoyed a few weeks of play, John Austin noticed that the card was regularly reaching temperatures of over 70 degrees. A few weeks later and the card had also begun to display graphical problems such as missing textures, and would give up the ghost



entirely after only 15 minutes of play. John contacted Overclockers who agreed to take the card back, test it and replace it if necessary, stating that this would take around seven to ten days. A month after the card had been returned, John chased it up but Overclockers stated that they were waiting on the manufacturer to send over a replacement. However, eight weeks after it had been returned, John was still cardless and just to rub things in, reading Watchdog, he discovered that another complainant had his card replaced in a mere three days.

In a display of scarily efficient customer services, Overclockers.co.uk got back to us within hours of our original contact. They

stated that: "Mr Austin's video card was returned to us and tested, and was found to crash and display artefacts and corruptions in 3D applications. The same day, the card was entered into our Supplier/Manufacturer returns system for warranty replacement." But after checking the status of the RMA with the suppliers, it became apparent that there had been "some administrative errors at the supplier's end resulting in our whole shipment of returns not been tested by themselves or Sapphire". They agreed that the dispute had gone on long enough and promptly agreed to ship John a brand new boxed version the very same day. Which just goes to show what can happen when you turn up the heat.

THE ACCUSED



Guilty until proven innocent



SAINTS NOT SINNERS

MEDION UK

A LOT OF things can happen in 18 months. If you're industrious enough you could, for example, start off your plans for world domination by producing two mini-versions of yourself (otherwise known as children). Or, just 18 months out of the shop, your PC might break down. Forget the kids, if your beloved pride and joy decides that life as a silicon-based box of wizardry is just too much to bear, then you've got problems. As reader Mike Agar well knows...

Eighteen months into the life of his Medion PC, it started to suffer from graphical crashes and restarts during demanding games such as *Oblivion*. Following a call to Medion's support line, an engineer was out within a week to replace the faulty video card with a new one. Mike's chuffed to bits with Medion for a number of reasons: "They didn't try to blame the games that were crashing, they didn't try to blame something I'd done and they didn't want the PC to be returned to base." Prompt, polite and efficient service? Medion... Watchdog salutes you!

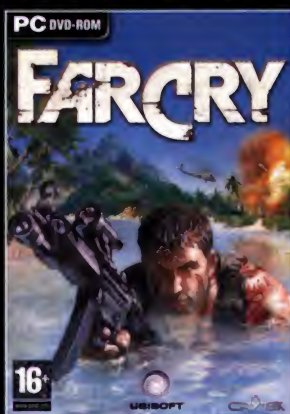


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REMEMBER:
YOU ALSO NEED
MONEY FOR FOOD
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

If you fancy some new hardware, you need cold hard cash. Nothing soft about this page...

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

X1900 XT

EXPECT TO PAY £371

MANUFACTURER CONNECT3D

WEBSITE www.connect3d.com

Like its GeForce 7800 GTX predecessor, our current video card champ is a reference card. It's also the fastest single device available, putting most dual-card configurations in the shade. We've chosen the Connect3D variant as it's a no-nonsense package for sensible money, making it an ideal grounding for CrossFire rigs.



PROCESSOR



CORE 2 EXTREME X6800

PAY £790

MAN Intel

WEB intel.com

Faster than its predecessor and faster even than any Athlon FX, Intel's new 2.93GHz Extreme processor features 1066MHz FSB, 4MB cache and LGA775 packaging. With a shorter pipeline, unique Smart Memory Access and Advanced Smart Cache technologies, its performance has people wondering what AMD can do to catch up.

MOTHERBOARD



D975XBX

EXPECT TO PAY

£150

MANUFACTURER

Intel

WEBSITE intel.com

Gamers back away from motherboards bearing the Intel logo, but you should be reassured by the name, not put off by it. The D975XBX is a genuine power-user product, with ATI CrossFire, eight USB holes, four SATA interfaces with RAID and eight-channel HD Audio. And it takes Core 2 Duo chips.

HDD



RAPTOR 150GB

EXPECT TO PAY

£190

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.wdc.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. It's also now double the size, meaning you now need just one of them in your rig. But two in RAID-0 configuration will give you oodles of space and make *Battlefield 2* really fly.

SCREEN



MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY

£311

MANUFACTURER

NEC Mitsubishi

WEBSITE

www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

SOUNDCARD



SOUND BLASTER X- FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£129

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

SPEAKERS



Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£188

MANUFACTURER

Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

X800 GTO

EXPECT TO PAY £110

MANUFACTURER GECUBE

WEBSITE gecube.com.tw

You could save yourself a tenner and go for the 8-pipeline GT, but you'd be missing out. The GTO is without doubt the mainstream card to go for: an overclocking dream, it can trump the 6800 GT on maximum detail and this GECUBE comes with a heat-pipe and sensible bundle.



PROCESSOR



ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY

£88

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

MOTHERBOARD



A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £55

MANUFACTURER

ASUSTek

WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

HDD



1200JS SATA

EXPECT TO PAY

£48

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN



VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY

£159

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710s is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

SOUNDCARD



SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

£32

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS



INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£39

MANUFACTURER

Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

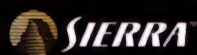
› Ultimate Game of The Year

› Publisher of The Year



› The One to Watch For 2007

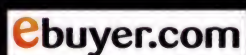
› Retailer of The Year



› Soundtrack Award

› Online Game of The Year

› PC Game of The Year



› PlayStation Game of The Year

Games released between 1 Aug 05 and 31st July 06 are eligible for this year's awards

computerandvideogames.com



XXIV ANNUAL
GOLDEN
JOYSTICK
AWARDS

› Nuts All-Nighter Award



› Xbox Game of The Year

› Nintendo Game of The Year

› Handheld Game of The Year

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WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

**FREE
GAMES!**

More free food!

WE ALL LOVE free stuff. One technique for not paying for something is to baffle the person who's trying to make you pay for something. I was at a concert a few weeks ago, and there was a stand selling burgers for £5, and cheeseburgers for £5.50. That's 50p for a slice of cheese.

Adopting a pose like the one at the top of the page, I asked for a burger with cheese, thereby subverting the lady's notions of burgers and cheeseburgers and their pricing, leading to her only charging me £5 for a cheese-laden burger. We both came away from the situation confused, before we realised what an amazing feat I'd just accomplished.

Another way to get something for free is to read the next 14 pages and absorb every mod, freeware game and demo until you're so bloated with freeness, it seeps from every orifice and you're terrified to move lest you rend yourself asunder. Freedom might not be free, but it's kind of disgusting.

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, staff writer

Try this!

Bill-bored?



On the Operation Harvest map of the latest *BF2* booster pack, *Armored Fury*, as well as on the Operation Road Rage map, there are billboards with the phrase 'Watch for the future' and a digital watch displaying the time 21:42. A clever reference to the upcoming *Battlefield* sequel.



Angry Allied gunners.

102 Demo Pages

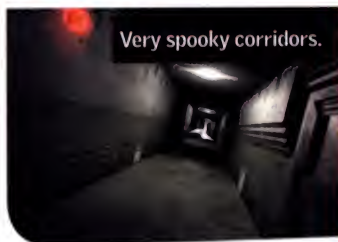
Get your free games here!



Super flying planes.

104 Buzz

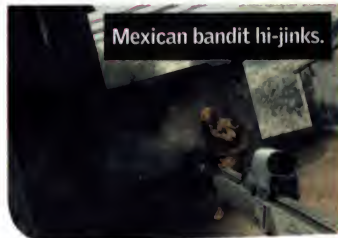
News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



Very spooky corridors.

108 Freeware

The crop-cream of free Internet gaming delivered straight to your doorstep



Mexican bandit hi-jinks.

110 Play!

Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



Native American prizes.

112 Prey Compo!

Win one of ten Collector's Edition copies of *Prey* - enter by text!



Clumsy Nazi stumbles.

114 Fight Club

Take us out, online! Now with more trounce to the ounce!



**PCZONE
FREE-O-METER**



**0
HOURS**

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



**168.0
HOURS***

Demos

On the DVD – free games galore!



EXCLUSIVE! FACES OF WAR

War has many faces, and none of them look particularly chuffed

www.facesofwargame.com



Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



IF YOU WERE born in the '70s, you'll probably see the words 'Faces' and 'Of' together, and immediately think of the 1978 Mondo film, *Faces Of Death*. Rumour had it, among excited children who hadn't seen many screwdriver-related deaths, that if you watched it, you'd see a real screwdriver going into an eye socket and everything. It was the pinnacle of cool to say your brother had

it on Betamax, but had lent it to someone who was now in jail.

Thirty years before Mondo made *Faces Of Death* there was World War II, which just goes to show that 100 minutes of faked death footage are pretty much bugged all compared to the majestic horrors that happen for real. And now today, Ubisoft bring you *Faces Of War*, an RTS that takes you through the final year of the most gamed-about war ever. The developers, Best Way, were last responsible for the unapologetically difficult *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* – but they've toned down the difficulty to something a little more reasonable for their new offering.

The demo features two playable levels, and there's a rolling demo that lets you take control at any time. You know, in case they start doing something stupid, like shooting each other's guns. Not that they'd do that. Just play the demo.



THE GATHERING

It's midnight in the Everglade Forest, and all the forest animals have gone to sleep. Except the owls, who are just waking up and brushing their beaks. Hello, what's this? Some soldiers have come out to play.

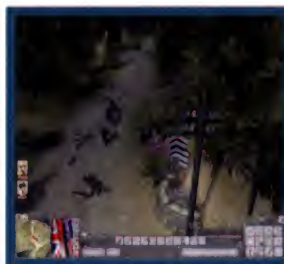


MOVEMENT!

Ooh, hello. They're moving in formation towards a waypoint. I wonder what those mischievous killing machines are up to? I hope it's not anything naughty, like hiding from their Sergeant up a tree, or in some bushes.



A BIG SURPRISE This is what you're in for, down in the woods today



OH DEAR

Well! I don't think anyone expected this WWII game to feature troops of Nazi soldiers... But it turns out that it does, and they're intent on killing you. That kind of ruins the playful tone of the story. Don't blame us, blame Hitler.



METAL DAISY

Oh, they're just going into Mr Farmer's house to look in the pantry. Being a soldier is hard work – especially the yomping – so it's little wonder they fancy a slap-up feed. I just hope the farmer doesn't find them in his larder!



SWORD OF THE STARS

You'll take someone's eye out with that www.swordofthestars.com

IN THIS DEMO of the excellent turn-based game of galactic overlordery, you can play as two of the game's four races. You'll learn about space navigation, building colonies and trading futuristic space commodities like space herbs, probably. And, if our understanding of interstellar travel is correct, your every move will be narrated by a sarcastic robot. "That was a great price at which to sell Space Parsley," the robot would say, before adding, "if you are a space idiot."

When you're finished with the 40-star spherical galaxy, you'll be legally entitled to go up to NASA and say: "Actually, you should be researching green lasers now – they're much more efficient. Where did you go to astronaut school – in a smelly hedge where tramps live?"

Space school 101

I spy common galactical things



HEAVENLY BODIES

As well as being a 1984 film in which two rival dance studios have a dance marathon, the phrase 'heavenly bodies' means stuff about planets. A member of the Tarkas Imperium would never dance – he'd slaughter your entire race.



TECH TREES

Space tech trees are very different from their historical uncles. They're not on parchments, they're in cylinders, but do go up – like real trees. Sadly, real trees can't survive in space, as Russians proved when they launched a Poplar into the sun.

NIGHT WATCH

Really? No batteries? That's a magic torch

www.nival.com/nightwatch

WHO DOESN'T LIKE to pretend that everyday items could be magical? Pianos, horses, hats, they've all been magic in our eyes. So it was only a matter of time before a Russian comic-book shared a magical talisman with an old children's TV show, thus allowing idiots like us to talk about entirely the wrong thing.

The two torches live in very different worlds. Whereas Jamie's adventures were 'real-time', *Night Watch* features turn-based tactical combat with role-play. And while Jamie always went to bed the same little boy, you'll be levelling up and gaining magical equipment. Give it a whirl – it's worth it for the accents alone.



- 1 This is you. By level five, you'll be fending off dark creatures and shapeshifting into a bear, I shouldn't wonder.
- 2 Vera's your first teammate – she'll be saying "I can't do that" and, "No way" just as much as your main character.
- 3 The woman in the bobble hat sounds like a terrifying slowed-down child. But she's got a key you need, so you have to talk to her. Hooray.

MAGIC TORCHES

We compare the best



Jamie's Magic Torch

Jamie's torch would create a pathway to Cuckooland, where he would be met by a midget scientist in a land-bound submarine. **4/5**



Night Watch Torch

More of a ranged weapon, causing elemental damage to dark creatures. Soon replaced with a halogen sword. **3/5 JAMIE WINS**

THE BEST OF THE REST



CARS

This is mental: everyday vehicles smiling and chatting. When we played this, a Toyota Yaris told us that he really liked *Sin Episodes*. He must have been mad – no wait, that was Will. www.carsmovie.co.uk



SETTLERS II: 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Eat enough Chicken Madras to cause your tear ducts to well, and the graphics in old strategy games might actually look quite good. No need here. The graphics are already upgraded and perfectly lovely. www.settlers.com



SHIP SIMULATOR 2006

In this demo, all you need to become an expert behind the mast is a song in your heart, a twinkle in your eye and the patience of a million angels. Sometimes we wear the tight neckerchiefs too. www.shipsim-secure.com



DARKSTAR ONE

If you're a dog, this demo of the first few missions of *Darkstar One* will make you so excited that you'll leap into your owner's arms and lick their face until your tongue dries out. If you're a human, you're probably more likely to just finish the demo, nod in appreciation and have a nice cup of tea. darkstar.one.com

PCZONE
HOT
DOWNLOADS

GTR2

gtr-game.10tacle.com



If the Disney Pixar version of driving strikes you as having too many eyeballs in the windscreen, then why not download this *GTR2* demo? If you're a serious car fan, you'll appreciate how *GTR2* tries harder to be sensible about the whole racing thing.

BROKEN SWORD

www.broken-sword.com



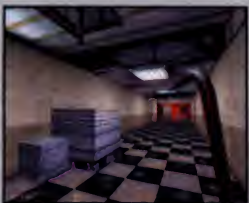
The fourth episode of George Stobbart's adventures through mythology and suchforth starts off in New York, but it's only a matter of time before it all becomes a globetrotting adventure to save the very globe you're trotting on.

SNIPPETS



PJ'S DISCO SPELL

www.elderscrolls-oblivion.com
With all of the impending doom, the world of *Oblivion* can be a depressing place. Well, now you can put a smile on the faces of NPCs the world over with *PJ's Disco Spell* mod, which allows you to imbue the people around you with the power of disco dancing. What could be better we ask? We can't think of anything. Apart from maybe a Salt & Vinegar Pringles and Marmite sandwich. Mmmm...



HALF-LIFE DONE IN 45 MINUTES

snipurl.com/pcz_hlspeed
If you've got 45 minutes to spare, maybe you've put every article of clothing you own in the dryer, then watch this guy finish the original *Half-Life* in 45 minutes by jumping around a lot and knowing exactly where to go. But at least drape a towel over yourself as you do it.

BLACKJACK ATTACK

The Dark Mod brings *Thief* back into the light www.thedarkmod.com | Mod for: Doom 3

DARKNESS, THE STATE of having very little or no light – if you're going to make a *Thief* total conversion, you'll want an engine naturally predisposed towards the stuff. That's probably why *The Dark Mod* has dropped silently through the open window of the Doom 3 engine, porting all of Garrett's stealthy loveliness into it with apparent ease.

Interestingly, the mod developers are touting this as more of a tool to create *Thief* content in the Doom 3 engine rather than a clean-cut total conversion, and knowing the Looking Glass community, who still eagerly map and mod for the *Thief* games, this could spell out the beginning of a burgeoning series of *Thief*-based *Doom 3* mods. Check out the movie on the website's front page – what these guys are doing is pretty spectacular.



"Is that you, Ted?"



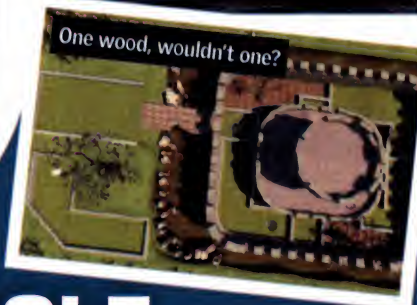
"Arrow. Ow do you do."



No wonder it's dark – candles indeed.



Mansions: horrific since 1953.



One wood, wouldn't one?

YOUR GOLF PUNS, SIR

Mini Golf: Source on par, still a fairway away though

minigolf.cglive.net | Mod for: Half-Life 2

GOLF IS A sport which has its fair share of representation in the games market. Somewhat less considered though, is its miniature version, mini-golf. Barely a miniaturised version of the sport at all, mini-golf is all about hitting a ball to enter a windmill or penetrate a giant clown.

Mini Golf: Source is still in its early stages, with only a few screens of a

fantasy course on display, but already it's clear that it's about to dock intimately with the gaping hole in the list of *Half-Life 2* mods which reads, 'We need a mini-golf mod, but please be gentle' along the top. Bet you didn't think we could get a vague sexual analogy into a news piece about a mini-golf mod, eh? Never underestimate us.



TWISTED METAL

DIPRIP revs into action www.diprip.com | Mod for: HL2

A MOD BASED upon the assumption that after a massive nuclear war we'd all end up roaming around in crude metal vehicles trying to impale each other on our cars, the irritatingly acronymed *DIPRIP* (short for Die In Pain, Rest In Peace) is heading towards a splash screen endowed with phrases as 'Vehicular Mayhem!' and 'Car? CARNAGE!!' or maybe even 'Full Throttle Fury!'.

OK, that last one's made up, but check out the trailer on their website to see what we're talking about – *DIPRIP* is the Source engine's answer to *Twisted Metal*, with abominations of the automotive industry striving to tear bits off one another using what appear to be guns and rockets. It's also got an old Fiat in there too, funnily enough, which probably isn't the best choice in multiplayer.



RED VS BLUE

PC ZONE speaks with **Matt Hullum** of *Red Vs Blue* about the most popular machinima series ever rvb.roosterteeth.com | Dev: Rooster Teeth

PCZ: Briefly, who are you and what do you do?

MH: "I work on *Red Vs Blue* and other Rooster Teeth stuff and cheat at Sudoku in my spare time."

PCZ: How was *Red Vs Blue* born?

MH: "It was a natural yet unholy delivery. Kind of like with that kid in *The Omen*. Burnie (part of the *Red Vs Blue* team) came up with *Red Vs Blue* while working on *Halo* gameplay videos and trying to make them more interesting. It was for a website called drunkgamers.com that was destined for failure. I only say 'destined for failure' because Gus and Geoff started it (also in the *RvB* team), and also because it actually did fail miserably. Luckily, *RvB* sprang like a phoenix from its pathetic, obnoxious ashes."

PCZ: Why on Xbox? Surely a PC game would have been more convenient?

MH: "Actually, the Xbox is a pretty great solution for machinima. We can have four characters on one box, but we'd need four computers to do that with a PC game. Or two pairs of socks if we were to create *Red Vs Blue* as sock puppet theatre. Xbox means fewer machines and warmer feet. Now that's convenience."

PCZ: We've heard the series has had

positive feedback from soldiers stationed in Iraq too.

MH: "Yeah, we've really enjoyed that. One of the coolest gifts we ever received was a pair of American flags – one for the Red team and one for Blue – that had been carried on missions in Afghanistan in a Black Hawk helicopter. We get great pictures all the time from Iraq too, like Humvees with 'warthog' spray-painted on the side. I think soldiers like it because they can relate to the military downtime jokes and the bureaucracy humour. One soldier even told us his unit commander made it a priority to download new episodes every week during their short Internet uptime."

PCZ: As industry interest grew, did you have to change your style?

MH: "We just like making goofy videos, so when we get asked to do something a little more 'industry', we try to bring the industry down to our immature level."

PCZ: What sort of feedback have you received from the film industry?

MH: "Mostly they're just trying to figure out what we're doing. When we try to explain *Red Vs Blue* and the art of machinima, most film people either don't believe us, don't understand it or don't care. We're breaking new ground."



Buy it now!

Check out the latest episode of *Red Vs Blue* on the website linked to above. But wait! You can also amass a beautiful collection of previous episodes by purchasing entire seasons on DVD, the fourth of which has recently come available for a mere \$20. That's what, about a tenner in real money? Bargain.

PCZ: Have Bungie been supportive?

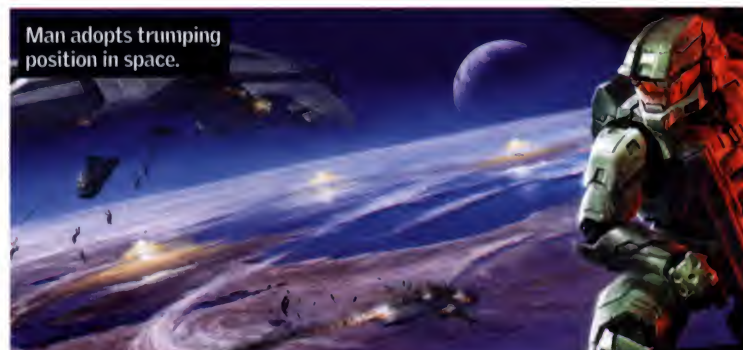
MH: "Bungie are great and really supportive of the entire *Halo* machinima community. They added back in the ability to lower the weapon in *Halo 2* which was actually a bug we exploited in the first *Halo*. Without that, all our dialog scenes would have been extremely aggressive."

PCZ: Finally, any plans for the future of Rooster Teeth?

MH: "Yes, we're still trying to figure out how to do a *Bejewelled* machinima piece. Stay tuned..."



Staring competition: impossible to judge.



Man adopts trumpling position in space.

Movie of the Month

PORTAL

Valve's recently-announced mini-game has blown everybody's minds by introducing the portal gun, allowing you to place portals which let you seamlessly enter one and exit another. What starts as a movie explaining the basics turns into a demonstration of just how far a simple concept can be taken. This is genius!



It first explains the fundamentals of portals. Make two, go in one and come out the other. Simple.



Not so simple: put two on a right-angled wall and chase yourself around in circles. Amazing.



There's a hole in the sky through which things can fly. There's also a hole in the wall...



Stick one on the floor, one on the ceiling and you can fall through infinity!

SNIPPETS



WHAT IS VAVOOM?

www.vavoom-engine.com
As long as you've got the WADs for either *Doom*, *Heretic* or *Hexen* (or even 'a little bit of *Quake*'), multiplayer platform game *Vavoom* allows you to play them in their updated graphical glory, splicing in online support as well as polygonal enemies and translucent textures. Fancy.



SUPER SERIF BROTHERS

snipurl.com/ps2_ssb
We see what they did here, a platformer game made entirely of ASCII characters in a serif font? Genius. It's not only a nice idea, it's also quite cleverly done, with levels requiring some forward planning and sense of direction. The charm manages to last a good five minutes too.

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH

WORLD OF WARCRAFT



This 'fixed an issue where the Undead female's ears clipped through the Polar Helmet'.



ALL EYES ON ENTERPRISE

Enterprise: Temporal Cold War lives long and prospers www.enterprise-tcw.modsite.org | Mod for: Half-Life 2

EVEN THOUGH *ENTERPRISE* is controversially considered the worst iteration of the *Star Trek* franchise to date, we (well, Will and Steve) quite like the feel-good theme tune and the images of astronauts screaming, "Go humanity!" as they blast off into space, before going on little spacewalks and repeatedly punching the infinite nothingness where we think its face would be. That's true defiance.

This incoming *Star Trek* mod has us sitting ever so slightly more towards the edge of our seats then, with its plans to totally convert

Half-Life 2 into a homage to the canned space series with the guy from *Quantum Leap* as the captain. "We will produce 99% of the content from scratch," confides CaptainSource, leader of the intrepid mod team. "This will include everything from the character models and spacecraft, right down to the communicators they use and the props laying around the place."

Props laying about the place? You mean like the shattered coffin of Gene Roddenberry after he'd spun around inside of it like an over-excited rotisserie chicken? Take that, *Enterprise* fans. Great-looking mod, though.



A NEW HOPE

Forgotten Hope 2 gets a sense of déjà vu

forgottenhope.bf1942files.com | Mod for: Battlefield 2

GIVE A MAN a copy of *Battlefield 1942* and he'll play with tanks for a day. Give a man a *Forgotten Hope* mod and he'll play with a far wider range of tanks and planes and World War II paraphernalia for a considerably longer time. On top of that, give that same man the prospect of the excellent *Forgotten Hope* mod being ported to *Battlefield 2*, and you'll make that man so happy that the mere thought of a Tiger tank will send him into a happiness-induced coma.

A still-popular mod for *Battlefield 1942*, *Forgotten Hope* adds heaped tablespoons of realism as well as many fluid ounces of vehicle and class-based

content. Now it plans to take this mixture and place it inside the preheated oven that is *Battlefield 2*. This changes the theme of the modern warfare online shooter with more severity than it did with *1942*, and fans should be excited about this total conversion.

Clever tweaks such as adding a pilot class and removing parachutes from all other classes, not having a sniper class available at spawn and instead requiring players to find the kits at relevant sniper points – they all combine, along with the fantastic extra vehicles, to make *Forgotten Hope* one of the most anticipated mods for *Battlefield 2*.



MACHINIMA, ANYONE?

The Last and *The Pwned Life* step up to the plate

The Last: snipurl.com/tf5x | The Pwned Life: snipurl.com/tf7a

TWO PIECES FROM the opposite ends of comedy machinima, here. On the left hand, we have the sober yin of *The Last*, in which a man has been unwittingly conscripted into the special forces. It combines a passable script with disciplined camerawork, though the acting is dodgy and the pace of the dialogue uncomfortably stilted.

The pauses reflect the characters' own waiting, but too often at the expense of holding your interest. The script demands – and deserves – snappier delivery, but lines like "I'd settle for guns that didn't jam at the worst possible (albeit most dramatic) moments," are well worth waiting for.

On the right hand, we have the raging yang of *The Pwned Life*, a chaotic 14-minute 133tum3nt4ry featuring a hit-and-miss script whose misses you're willing to forgive because there are enough headshots and visual jokes to raise a 'lol'. Expect to roll your eyes at the casual homophobia, but if it helps, treat it as a parody of the prevailing attitudes among less mature gamers. Even though it isn't.



A life-sized chess game gets out of hand.



A game of two dimensions.

FANTASY FOOTIE

Ready for the new season?

www.corefootball.com

ONLINE FANTASY FOOTBALL tournaments are as popular right now as that joke about Sophie Ellis-Bextor being headbutted to death in a French apartment, but what sets *coreFootball* apart is the amount of AI ticking over behind the scenes. Matches are played in real-time, meaning you can make substitutions and change

tactics as the game plays out, instead of watching hopelessly as your fantasy team gets their arses kicked. Registration is free, and of course there's a paid account option if you want to WIN! BIG! PRIZES! Otherwise, it's not bad for a bit of fun now that another World Cup has passed us by. It was murder on Zidane's floor, by the way.

I'M OFF LADS

Until I'm Gone explores a dying genre www.farawaystudios.com

POINT-AND-CLICK adventures are a bit dead, you might think. Like an old grey dog, wobbling on his rickety legs. Or an old man, in a home, with porridge dribbling down his chin. But now, in a fantastic ray of hope, comes *Until I'm Gone*, a

full-on, standalone adventure game with an odd work-in-progress name. And when you consider the *Half-Life 2* mod, *Shantytown* (see page 113), it looks like this genre could be making a comeback. Keep an eye on this one – it looks fantastic.



Looks like they're gone.

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A... FANSITE WEBMASTER



NAME: Atle Wilson (Odin)
JOB TITLE: IT consultant/webmaster of the *Fallout* fansite No Mutants Allowed
WORKING ON: *nma-fallout.com*
AGE: 31
EXPERIENCE: NMA is Odin's first fansite

PCZ How did you get started?

AW "I was browsing the Net looking for news regarding *Fallout 2* and found the No Mutants Allowed website. I would check the Interplay forums regularly and ended up scooping the *Fallout* fansites, so I decided to offer my services to NMA."

PCZ What's the pay like?

AW "I don't make a penny from the fansite, it's all done by choice and the hosting is paid for by our ads. The DNS, however, is paid out of my own pocket, so you could say I pay for the project."

PCZ What does your job involve?

AW "We spend most of our time browsing forums for news about *Fallout 3*, which is currently in progress at Bethesda. As we've been around for some time, we've got to know most of the developers and as such we get tips which we then post about."

PCZ How rewarding is your job?

AW "The work in itself can be rewarding as you bring a service to people who're looking for that product. But what's really rewarding is the fact that you get to meet a lot of interesting people – developers or fans of *Fallout*."

PCZ What's the most annoying part of your job?

AW "People expect you to know everything about the *Fallout* world. Plus, we get a lot of people on our forum asking the same questions over and over again."

WE SAY, DIY

Well, quite literally, do it yourself. If you're really interested in running a fansite there's very little stopping you, and even less to lose. So off you go.



Freeware



Steve Hogarty rides the freeware bus to Freetown, USA

PENUMBRA

Good-looking Freeware game shocker!

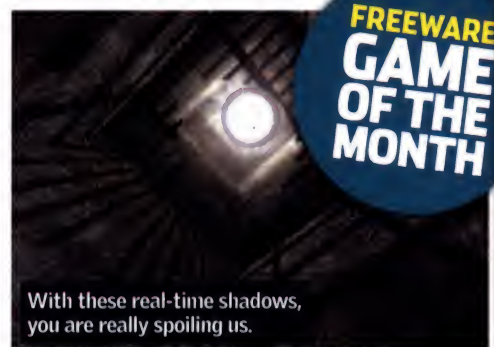
Developer: Frictional Games | frictionalgames.com

FREEWARE FPS GAMES: there's a reason there aren't many of them around. They're exceedingly difficult to create, and rarely, if ever, match the quality of commercial releases. But as I played *Penumbra*, I hooked the interests of no less than two innocent bystanders, who chimed in with phrases like, "That's not a freeware game" and "What the hell is going on here?" To which I respectfully replied, "Yes, it is a freeware game" and, "I'm playing *Penumbra*, a freeware game".

Penumbra looks fantastic, and immediately compares to full-priced games such as *Condemned* and *Silent Hill*. Rather than falling back on the far-easier-to-design concept of pointing and shooting guns at bad men, it

instead focuses on item-based puzzles and tasks. At this stage, however, it's still more of a tech demo than a proper game, but it's impressive nonetheless. Technically, it's boasting graphical features on a par with today's games, along with a physics system used to move objects and open doors. A physics system which actually works.

It's ever so slightly terrifying too, with crazy HP Lovecraft rejects skulking around. When they appear they make the music go all crazy, instilling me with a sense of girlish panic most commercial games fail to provide. Mostly though, *Penumbra* is proof that



With these real-time shadows, you are really spoiling us.

three guys with enough determination and skill can actually create something decent and not like those usual crap freeware FPS games with garish colours and recycled deathmatch modes.

It'll probably be a long time before you see something of this potential and graphical quality in Freeware again, as games so lovingly created aren't common, so lap it up while you can – these guys deserve all the encouragement they can get.



LYLE IN CUBE SECTOR

More bizarrely named platformers

Dev: Bogo
snipurl.com/pcz_lyle

WHAT LENGTHS WOULD one man go to just to rescue his wide-eyed anime cat? How about a full-length platform game? *Lyle In Cube Sector* is about a man named Lyle, who lives in a sector populated by cubes. It's a lot like *Cave Story* and a bit like *Metroid*. In order to traverse the platform world and destroy the enemies who impede his progress, Lyle must pick up and throw cubes, solve cube-throwing puzzles and sometimes just throw cubes for the hell of it. He's on a mission to save his cat you see, and no cube is safe from green-haired Lyle's throwing abilities. You earn power-ups as you go to pick up better cubes and generally have a good time. Off you go then.



CORTEX COMMAND

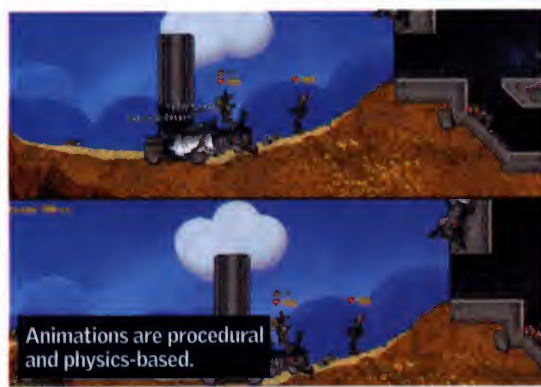
The worms have turned Developer: Data Realms | datarealms.com

WORMS, BEFORE IT went all horrible and pointlessly 3D, was a great series. Side-on wormongering with physics-based weapons, deformable terrain and beautifully quirky style provided some of the best multiplayer laughs you can garner from solitary PC. *Cortex Command*, currently still in development and as such almost entirely unfinished, essentially handles like a real-time version of the classic strategy game. A bit like *Soldat* then.

The joy in playing it in its current form, despite requiring two people to crouch over a single keyboard, comes in the fact that it's so unpredictably impressive and funny. Each controlling a single character, you use a variety of weapons to inflict harm upon one another. Movement is still clunky in this test version, and jumping doesn't work too well, but as soon as you plough your rocket into the ground and accidentally kill your opponent in the process, you'll appreciate the sheer potential this game has. Guns tear holes in terrain allowing you to retrieve gold, recoil from guns propels you backwards or skywards, engine blasts fry enemies, cement guns encase them, weapons knocked from your hands continue to fire – the game is a veritable sandbox of hilarity.

Progress is coming quick and fast too, so I'd recommend bookmarking the website and checking back every now and then.

People expecting a fully working game will of course be disappointed, but the exciting prospect of a fantastic multiplayer experience will be enough for most.



Animations are procedural and physics-based.



Load the gold into the rocket and fly away to win.



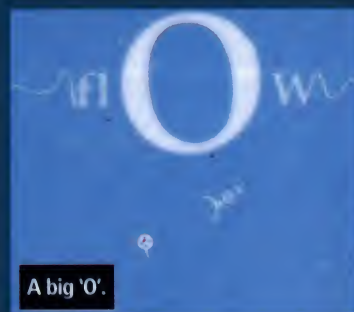
Flying rockets is hard, but crashing them is fun.

FLOW Go with it Developer: Jenova Chen | www.jenovachen.com

MICROBIAL LIFE FORMS, recently popularised by such games as *Electroplankton* and the first bits in *Spore*, have been soaking up attention recently. So much so that the Japanese have begun harpooning whales just to scrape their teeth and sell the produce in the lucrative plankton market. *Flow* comes from the same guy who made *Cloud*, except this time around it's not nearly as pretentious and is actually oddly involving.

Starting as the littlest worm in the ocean (or whatever the blue/orange abyss represents), you swim around eating smaller creatures and growing larger, sometimes eating things which cause you to progress deeper and eventually evolving into a new and beautiful organism. Screw intelligent design, because this is both far more interesting and not

actually a load of bollocks. Challenge is offered in the form of rival creatures, who you must destroy and consume by picking away at their most vital bits (they've only got a few cells, so don't even try to think of a connotation), and success is rewarded with pretty extensions to your creature's body. Utterly entrancing, *Flow* will hook you immediately.



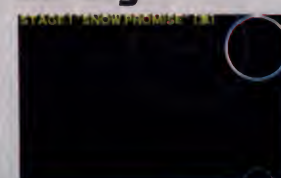
A big 'O'.



Life in the petri dish was about to get deadly.

Proof that god doesn't exist.

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH Cirring



Dev: Japanese people
snipurl.com/pcz_cirring

The Japanese are neat, polite and great at playing videogames, particularly ones related to rhythm and action. But now for a sweeping generalisation: there are no good rhythm action games on PC. Until now that is! *Cirring* (the full game title has some Japanese pictures/letters after it) is a game in which you must position your mouse within circles in tune with some funky music. As circles widen and pop, you move the cursor about to make clapping and popping noises. It gets difficult once circles start overlapping and it becomes hard to distinguish which ones will pop first, but you'll breeze through the easy setting's three songs without much trouble. It's surprisingly fun to play, and the songs aren't all that bad either. Even though we've no idea who made the thing, or what *Cirring* even means, we like it.

FREEPLAYPLAY!



How green are their valleys? Quite, actually.

Play: **MOD**



ASSAULT CO-OP



Jon Blyth dives into a half-finished mod, gets knees wet www.freewebs.com/knight7team | Mod for: Far Cry

Am I late or early for the war?

Time Left: 10
Reinforcements

MY PROBLEM WITH *Far Cry's* AI is that they're not people, they're stupid bags of brainless polygons. So when you've been outgunned, outwitted, outflanked and outclassed three dozen times by nothing more than a complicated shape full of scripts, it's enough to make you sink into an existential despair. That's the feeling that *Far Cry's* AI briefly had on me, anyway. It's enough to make you wish you had someone on your side. Someone *co-operating*, perhaps.

Headshot-proof?



That's not the idea behind *Assault Co-op*, of course – not everyone's as disgracefully skills-free as myself. Some people just love the fun of co-operative squadplay and are really good at it. People like FlameDragon7, who's providing teamwork in the *Far Cry* engine for people who don't shout, "I tripped over a tree can someone shoot the enemy guy please!"

The current version of *Assault Co-op* – more than a skin, but falling short of a final release – contains just five maps. One of which, I should mention, has an unfinished feel in the form of *Far Cry's* 'Replace Me!' missing texture jobbie appearing all over the floor. The Barriers map transposes the Gauntlet game from TV's *Gladiators* into a valley littered with barriers to hide behind and shoot through, while Panic attempts to replicate something similar to the opening scenes of *Call Of Duty 2* – with lines of wiry posts all over the shop.

There's a lot of potential here, but it's not quite been tied together. The fabled *Far Cry* AI just doesn't have the opportunity to thump you in the chops. Take the Barriers level – the AI's capacity to interact, scout you out, take cover and use suppressing fire just can't shine in a featureless, narrow valley. In fact, the NPCs tend to act positively stupid, at times. They'll still shoot you in the face, I'll grant you that, but not in a way that'll make your jaw drop. Apart from drop off, if they shot you in the jaw.

It's very much a work in progress; v1.1 looks set to improve upon current maps and introduce more styles of play, including a Co-operative Campaign, Allied Warfare, and Fort Ambush. It's a mammoth task, especially considering that this has so far been a largely solo project for the very hard-working FlameDragon7. With a lot more work and a few more people, we look forward to trying out version 1.1.

GRAW MAP PACK 1



Play: **MAP**



Steve Hogarty starts patching himself up

www.ghostrecon.com/uk/newspost.php?id=15886
Map for: Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter

DEAR LORD, I can only imagine what things are like at GRIN. Perhaps some radioactive juice spilled on their staff as they developed the v1.16 patch for *Advanced Warfighter*, causing them to create not only a piece of software which fixes a load of boring bugs about tanks, but to add a new Deathmatch mode featuring three new maps, make three of the single-player missions available in co-op (meaning the entire campaign is now available in multiplayer), add a map editor (for editing maps) and anti-aliasing (hooray). Surely their keyboards have now melted with all their frenetic typing, and with the patch finally complete and their digits now motionless, the strands of melted beige plastic hang from their fingertips like tiny stalactites.

Actually, black is probably the most popular keyboard colour these days, but that's beside the point. Also released was the *GRAW* Advanced Tactical Center, which allows you to draw phallus-shaped plans of



Shade attack.

action on various pictures of the multiplayer maps (probably useful to some hardcore clan gamer types). However, the main attraction remains the deathmatch, whose action-packed gunnery has been complemented with some new movement tweaks. It does contradict the game's mantra ever so harshly (team deathmatch is coming), but nonetheless it's three free maps. And you can't argue with free, so don't even try.



DOOM PET MOD



You don't need to buy them food or anything

snipurl.com/pcz_pets | Mod for: Doom 3

WHAT COULD BE more adorable than a big-pawed puppy jumping up your trousers and making a little puddle because he's so happy? Nothing. Nothing's more heart-warming than a wee pupkins cocking his fluffy head and making a little wuffle when he hears footsteps. Aoww!

On the other hand, they are a bit of an effort. You can't get drunk and sleep in next-door's skip for two weeks, because your Labrador will have gone through the cupboards and chewed up your pillow cases.

We're so fundamentally irresponsible that any adorable puppy would wind up mangy and dead from neglect – and in Will's case, full-on abuse. So we use the *Pet Mod* for *Doom 3* to spawn all manner of beasts who will follow us around all day and moan the laments of the damned when we click on their little button noses.

All you do is bring the console down and use a quick 'spawn' command, and a couple of lightning bolts later, you'll have your very own hell imp or zombie following you around. They're free, and they don't trump when you squeeze them. Now that's good pets.



Play: **MOD**



PCZONE TOP 5 MODS THAT WENT COMMERCIAL



- 1 COUNTER-STRIKE**
The unbelievably popular online shooter was once an unbelievably popular *HL2* mod.
- 2 RED ORCHESTRA**
The *Ostfront* version of this WWII *Unreal Tournament* mod hit the shelves not long ago.
- 3 GARRY'S MOD**
Still available for free, later versions of this *HL2* mod will carry a price tag.
- 4 DAY OF DEFEAT**
The original *Half-Life* mod went commercial, as did its Source-based successor.
- 5 TEAM FORTRESS**
Originally a mod for *Quake*, *Team Fortress 2* is now being developed by Valve.

PJ'S SPELL COMPENDIUM

Steve Hogarty tries to comprehendium

snipurl.com/pcz_spells | Mod for: Oblivion

I'M NOT SURE why, but *Oblivion* kept crashing on me today, so instead of pacing myself and buying a handful of the compendium of spells which PJ has added to the game, and allowing my clumsy magicka skills to restrict me, I brought up the console and cheated. I switched on god mode, gave myself every single spell and fast-travelled to Skingrad or Anvil or some other forsaken village to try them out.

Thusly I unleashed PJ-assisted fury, raining down meteors from on high and summoning giant atronachs, conjuring up hurricanes to blow away angry villagers, then making everybody around me dance for a bit, then stopping time

and leaping on to a roof, casting a black hole which sucked people in and spat them out into the sky somewhere. Oh, there was also this one guy who I made a clone of, only the clone was half his size. Then the mini-clone killed him and chased me around for a bit. That's sheer genius.

PJ's *Spell Compendium* is actually built to fit into the game without unbalancing it, and how well it achieves that isn't immediately apparent, especially if you stick on god mode like I did. What it is however, is a lot of fun, clever and often hilarious spells, and a welcome addition to anybody's angry vengeful god-spree.



WIN A SPECIAL EDITION COPY OF PREY!

We've got ten of them. Want to win one?

PORTALS, EH? IF we could actually harness that technology, just imagine the possible uses. Slapping somebody from across the room, playing tennis with yourself – there are probably more, but just those two alone are pretty exciting don't you think?

Well, to celebrate the glorious virtues of our trans-dimensional anomalous friends, we're giving away ten copies of *Prey*. Not only that, but they're special editions, you just can't get these in the UK – they actually disintegrate upon contact with her majesty's soil, they're *that* exclusive. Winners will also receive a snazzy *Prey* mousemat and a figurine of an abominable human-alien hybrid.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

- ✓ Metal packaging (it's not technically in the box)
- ✓ Art book (already coloured in)
- ✓ Two pewter figurines (one of Tommy, one of a Hunter)

WIN!

In order to win this prize, just answer the following question:

WHICH OF THESE IS A FAMOUS INVENTION OF BRITISH INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER JAMES DYSON?

- (A) A vacuum cleaner which is powered by pure funk energy
- (B) A sort of hairy stick which you can push around to remove dirt from floors
- (C) A vacuum cleaner which works on the principle of cyclonic separation

Don't forget to tell us your most anticipated PC game when entering by post! For postal entries, send your entries on a postcard to *Prey Compo*, PC ZONE, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. You can now enter via text message too: simply text PCZPREY, followed by a space, then either A, B or C followed by your name and address to 80889. Text entries will be charged at 50p plus your standard network tariff rate. By texting PC ZONE, you're agreeing to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing. If you do not wish to receive information relating to future offers and promotions, please text the word NO at the end of your text message. Competition ends September 13. Standard competition rules apply so check page 9 for more. We are not accountable for any eye-strain caused by this tiny text.



SHANTYTOWN

Play: MOD



Won't you take me to, a *Shantytown*? snipurl.com/pcz_shanty | Mod for: Half-Life 2

PLAYING SHANTYTOWN REMINDS US of two very distinct things. The first is the setting, a world in which a forest of poisonous fungi has spread across the planet and forced people to live in multi-tiered cities with the poor people living underneath the rich, who weigh things down with their golden cars and piles of diamonds. That reminds us of *Nausicaä Of The Valley Of The Winds*, a great Miyazaki movie about a girl who can talk with giant woodlice.

The second is more unexpected in a HL2 mod. It reminds us of *Anachronox*, because rather than being a standard FPS mod, it converts HL2 into a point-and-click adventure, complete with an automated hovering robot friend to follow you around, taking notes and holding your inventory.

Oddly enough too, it seems to do a U-turn after the po-faced seriousness of its intro by presenting a story in which Ellie, the main character (and a red-haired version of Alyx), is on a quest to find out why her superiors on the level above her are dumping trash on her house. Entire watermelons they're chucking too. Madness.

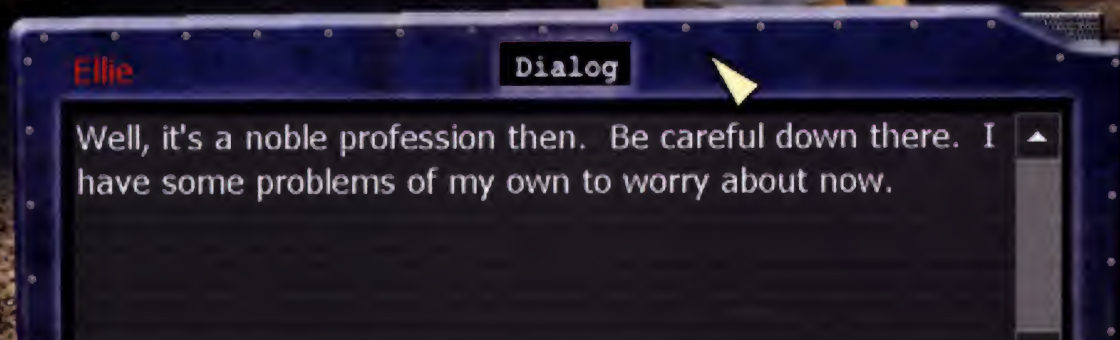
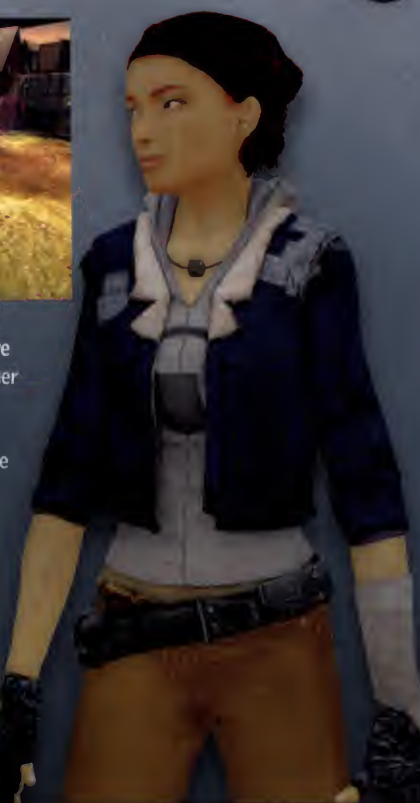


Movement works quite well for the most part, although the interface has problems settling into the right spots at certain resolutions. The mod's puzzles are a matter of swapping one item for another while using Ted the robot's abilities where they're required. He heats things up, freezes things, magnetises them to move them about and speaks in a robotic-version of the French language – which, as you'd imagine, is extremely unnerving.

Speaking of which, the voice-acting, while a bit over-pronounced and odd-sounding, is actually passable for an amateur mod. There's one guy whose endearing bean monologue raised a smile,

and a German guy whose accent we simply didn't trust, although whether either was deliberate isn't clear.

Even though it's short, *Shantytown* shows just how flexible the Source engine actually is. Seeing Mossman speak with a southern accent, asking you to help her cook a pot of chicken is an experience in itself too. It even ends on what we consider to be a bit of a cliffhanger, with the question Ellie poses to Ted, "I wonder what's behind that door," going entirely unanswered. How thrilling.



Fight Club



The ninth rule of Fight Club is... Don't leave it 'til the last minute

**COME AND
TAKE ON THE
ZONE STAFF IN
OUR MONTHLY
ONLINE GAMING
FREE-FOR-ALL!**

FIGHT CLUB WAS a cosier affair than usual this month, after an ill-advised experiment in making the whole thing more impromptu and spontaneous. By putting the dates in the forums rather than chisel them into stone here in the magazine, we reasoned, we'd be able to engage in more regular wars with our beloved readership – that's you by the way.

Instead, confusion reigned and we bedded into combat with a pleasant, if smaller than usual crowd for *Call Of Duty 2*. One of whom, Captain Anderson, had

the temerity to ask, "So, who are you guys, then?" as he shot us in the head. The nerve.

Then came Sniper, whose arrival and rapid assassination had Andy 'The Hoodlum' Robinson demanding to know if we had Punkbuster on. It wasn't until Andy had crept up to his hiding place and popped a cap in his ruddy noggin (as they say in Victorian-era Harlem) that he'd accept that Sniper wasn't some cheaty-buffed swine. With all the practice we get, you'd think that we'd be far better losers by now.

We missed a lot of you this month, so here's fair warning; next Fight Club will celebrate the announcement of *Team Fortress 2* by playing *TF Classic*. Thursday, August 24, 6pm. Be there.



"Dammit, I only meant to scare him."



"Stop shooting back - I'm sniping you."



Will shoots Log again, who has a strop and refuses to spawn.

Press USE [F] to spawn



For warmth? Come now, it's the middle of summer...

Killed by PCZBatsphinx

AND THE WINNER IS...

A homage to sugar-filled snacks

WE'VE DECIDED TO step outside the normal conventions of our Fight Club screenshot competition this month, and award the prize to our unfailingly loyal snack carousel. Not because our organisational experiment in 'not effectively publishing the time of Fight Club' meant a small turnout, heavens no.

Rather, we dedicate this competition to our snack carousel, because it's the one constant in our world, the mother's milk of the Tunnock's Tea Cakes giving us lightly-whipped succour in these ever-changing times.

The runner-up this month is the free drinks machine, which was just knocked out of first place by the fact it keeps running out of chocolate-flavoured dust. The screenshot competition will resume normal service next month.

RUNNER-UP!



Steve and our nearly-a-winner free drinks machine.

WINNER!



Sweets, dried fruit, health bars full of sugar – our vending machine has it all.

ZONE CHAT



Return of the Chat, oh my god, return of the Chat, here I am...

ONCE YOU'VE SAT next to your colleagues for a while, you begin to think you know them. You go to lunch with them, you share a packet of Brussels Pâté in a field and talk about your hopes and dreams. Then you find out in an mIRC channel that Will went to a brothel and it all falls apart. "I didn't know it was a brothel," he typed, without the help of italics to truly convey his pleading tone of voice. It turns out that a drunken Porter was making idle conversation with a nonplussed lady, who simply barked: "I come here for the sex," in reply.

As the chat wore on, with talk of *Portal* and *Team Fortress 2*, the final bell for home-time rang and we realised we'd nearly forgotten to throw prizes at you, so we looked around the newspapers that litter our cage and asked you a question about something on the front page. We'll do something more imaginative next month, with maps and riddles – it'll be just like *The Goonies*. Next **ZONE Chat** will be on Wednesday, August 23 at 5.30pm. Put on your tri-cornered chat, Sloth – we're adventure bound!

Portal – Prey's anus-free brother.



How to join in!



If you fancy joining the **ZONE Chat**, then you'll need an IRC program and a Net connection. We recommend mIRC and you can find it on side-two of our DVD. Just install the program, set the options, devise an online identity that'll make you stand out from the crowd, connect to a Quakenet server nearest to you, type /join #pcz into the command line, and hey presto, you're there! Chatting with the friendliest bunch of online readers you could hope to find. Remember, play nice and don't be rude.

Can't make Fight Club?

If you can't make it to Fight Club – perhaps the gripping plot of *Hollyoaks* is too much at the moment and you can't drag yourself away – then join other **PCZ** readers on the following public servers. **ZONE** staff might even be there. The latest info can always be found at www.zonegames.co.uk.

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Suzy Wallace PCZ_Uzibat
Steve Hogarty PCZ_escaped_monkey
Andy Robinson PCZ_EssexHoodlum
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Jon Blyth PCZ_Log

- 1 **SWAT 4**
swat4.zonegames.co.uk
- 2 **COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE**
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025
cs3.zonegames.co.uk:27015
- 3 **HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH**
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065
- 4 **DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE**
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085
- 5 **BATTLEFIELD 1942 DC MODDED**
dc.zonegames.co.uk:14567
- 6 **TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC**
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045
- 7 **WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY**
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960
- 8 **UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004**
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888
- 9 **CALL OF DUTY**
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960
- 10 **JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING**
Listed on NovaWorld

Retro ZONE

All the best in emulation, abandonware and shameless gaming nostalgia...

COMMODORE 64



EMULATION
OF THE
MONTH

BUT HOW?

To play C64 games, you'll need an emulator

We used version 3 of the excellent CCS64, but Vice is good, too. Once you've got that, you'll need disc images of the games you want to play, which you then put in a pretend disk drive, so the emulator can read them. It's technically a bit illegal, but it's not our place to stop you from performing a rudimentary web search – perhaps using Google – and download them all. You scamps.

Links...

1 **CCS64**,
www.ccs64.com

The emulator you'll need to play *Monty Mole* and write your own BASIC programs.

2 **SidPlay**,
snipurl.com/srlx

If you just want to play SID music files.

AFTER IT, THE Atari ST would have built-in MIDI ports, allowing its users to say, 'The KLF wrote *Last Train To Transcendental* on an ST, you know', as though that somehow made the owner a chart-topping musician. Before it, the ZX Spectrum was firing off monophonic BEEP commands like a Nokia in a swimming pool. And bang in the middle, the Commodore 64's SID chip single-handedly kick-started the golden age of videogame music.

As the musicians learned how to push the hardware, the gameplay would often be overshadowed by the music, and composers like Rob Hubbard and Tim Follin became unlikely celebrities. Back in 1983 we'd leave *Thing On A Spring* running in the background as we did our homework, and we're fairly certain that hundreds of schoolgirls



gathered around portable TVs to dance to *Monty On The Run*.

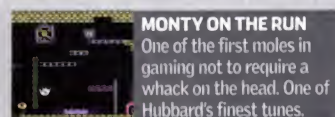
Atari's 8-bit rival never really took off in the UK (just as the Spectrum utterly failed to make it in the States), so before the 16-bits wiped the slate clean, the C64 was neck-and-neck with Clive Sinclair's machine to be the undisputed king of home computing.

The C64 edged the graphics and sound to the point where people wanted

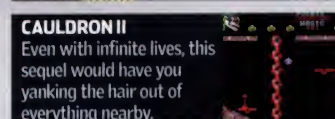
to show off, and the demo – along with the demo scene – was born. Dedicated coders, musicians and artists would flex their skillz in a fragile, anaemic equivalent of a rap battle. You can relive the rivalries of strangers in the scrolling messages of the demos, which are mostly still available for download. So go ahead – play. Just remember that the games you don't remember were probably forgotten for a reason.

Coders and artists flexed their skillz in an anaemic equivalent of a rap battle

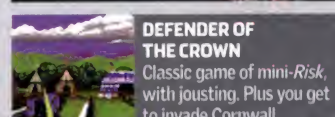
SIX OF THE BEST The half-dozen C64 games you just have to play



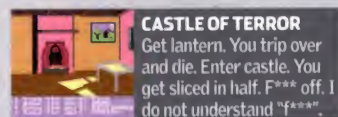
MONTY ON THE RUN
One of the first moles in gaming not to require a whack on the head. One of Hubbard's finest tunes.



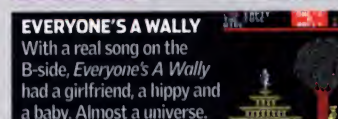
CAULDRON II
Even with infinite lives, this sequel would have you yanking the hair out of everything nearby.



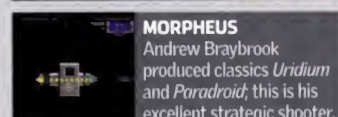
DEFENDER OF THE CROWN
Classic game of mini-Risk, with jousting. Plus you get to invade Cornwall.



CASTLE OF TERROR
Get lantern. You trip over and die. Enter castle. You get sliced in half. F*** off. I do not understand "f***".



EVERYONE'S A WALLY
With a real song on the B-side, *Everyone's A Wally* had a girlfriend, a hippy and a baby. Almost a universe.



MORPHEUS
Andrew Braybrook produced classics *Uridium* and *Paradroid*; this is his excellent strategic shooter.



Tapper: sponsored by Budweiser.



Bruce Lee: with green-guy multiplayer.

NOW & THEN

Midwinter – a massive pixellated snowy adventure

NOW



CRYSIS, 2007

THEN



MIDWINTER, 1989

CRYSIS AND MIDWINTER might not seem likely counterparts when viewed side by side. One is far and away the best-looking videogame ever crafted with trees, snow, alien craft and real-time lighting effects – the other has hills made of triangles and different shades of blue with pixels you can count while the game loads the next frame.

We originally drew comparisons with *Far Cry*, purely because it has a hang-glider and so does *Midwinter* (and we're easy to please in that respect), but we decreed that the main difference was the climate. *Far Cry* is hot, *Midwinter* is cold, and no amount of hang-gliders can make them seem equivalent. *Crysis* is cold too though, and as long as they keep the hang-glider (which isn't unlikely), then maybe Professor Compare-The-Games will rear his calculating head yet again to draw well-informed parallels. Sniping, vehicles, snow, hang-gliders, large world – as long as these five features are repeated over and over, the list of similarities here are endless.

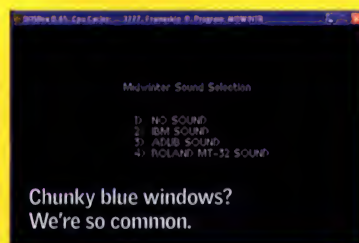


PLAY IT!



Midwinter is abandonware and despite what some nerds insist, is still a legal quagmire. A quagmire is a sort of marsh full of people suing us. So follow these instructions instead.

- 1 Run a Google search for 'Midwinter game'. Whatever you find has got nothing to do with us.
- 2 Load up that legal copy of *Midwinter* you've had on your hard drive the whole time using DOSBox (dosbox.sourceforge.net).
- 3 Use keyboard controls and click menu buttons until you're having fun.
- 4 Your PC will run the 3D sections of the game at lightning speed. Hit Ctrl+11 to slow it down.
- 5 Now you're no longer skiing at supersonic speeds, enjoy *Midwinter*.



Chunky blue windows?
We're so common.

MAME FRAME

The great ape that saved Nintendo

DEVELOPER Nintendo YEAR 1981

BY 1980, JAPANESE entertainment company Nintendo was up a particularly shitty creek without a paddle that probably wouldn't have worked anyway. The company's new flagship videogame *Radar Scope* (a dull *Galaxians* clone also playable through MAME) was a flop in the arcades, so a young designer called Shigeru Miyamoto was brought in to make it more enjoyable. However, Miyamoto bravely decided to dump *Radar Scope* and come up with something else, and along with another legendary designer

Gunpei Yokoi (who went on to create the Game Boy and Virtual Boy), he made a videogame classic.

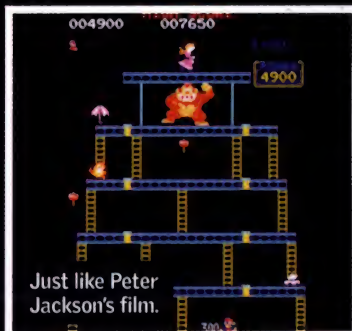
Donkey Kong (the name conveying the main character's stubbornness) was the first Nintendo game to feature Mario (or 'Jumpman') displaying his trademark overalls, cap and 'tache. The simple, addictive gameplay of jumping over barrels, climbing ladders and leaping platforms became a huge hit and established Nintendo as a major player. But you knew all this, didn't you? You didn't? Get to the back of the class...

WHAT IS MAME?

MAME is an emulator for over 6,000 arcade games, and is perfectly legal. However, on its own it's useless, and requires ROMs to play all the old coin-ops. These ROMs are copyrighted, so it's illegal to own them unless you own the arcade machine. We're not nagging, we're just letting you know.



Miyamoto's first Nintendo game was a worldwide smash.



Just like Peter Jackson's film.

BACK IN THE DAY...



4. Civilization's Diplomat

By Will Porter

He looked so smart in his little Abe Lincoln hat. "Hello!" he'd say in my imagination as he crossed the border into the Roman Empire. "I'm a diplomat, and I hail from the good city of WillisCool – the very heart of the Willis empire." Then, as he crossed the Rubicon, he'd continue his affable ramblings. "Yes! I'm here to improve our international relations. I may set up a school for the blind, or even oversee trade between our great nations to ensure mutual economic benefit." Then, as the hubbub died down and my little hero closed the door behind him in his Roman villa, he'd smile. He'd smile and shout, "You dolts! I'm here to spy! To steal your technology and your women! I'm here to prepare for the victory of the Willis! Long live WillisCool! Long live the Emperor!" Oh, happy days.

CREATING
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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Steve Hill gets a makeover in *Second Life*

IT STARTED WITH an email.

Sender: Alayna Hutson. Subject: Message From *Second Life*. Text: "Hi there! I heard about your experience in *Second Life* and wondered if you would like to ditch the whole retail sex experience sometime and have a much better *SL* experience on your terms. Lemme know when you have a chance! I heard that you hate online gaming so I don't even know if you will actually get this message! Take care!"

Seems innocuous enough, so I send a tentative reply: "Hi. What did you hear? Who are you? What do you suggest?"

Alayna soon replies, referring to me by my *SL* name, and maintaining her quota of unnecessary exclamation marks: "NeverQuest Tripp! I have a friend in the UK, he's apparently a big fan of yours! Likewise, he's a fan of mine and he read me the article you wrote on *SL*. I'm very into *SL*, and I was wondering if you'd like to have a positive experience in *SL*."

"A positive experience sounds good – how do I go about that?"

A time is arranged, and Alayna is appalled to find me lurking in Bad Girls – a club of ill repute – eyeing up the strippers. She's a sassy, well-presented redhead, and it's perhaps not the ideal place for a first

date. Alayna politely suggests moving on elsewhere, albeit to the scarcely more respectable-sounding Pleasurable Sinners. It's a tranquil open-air oasis of calm, with soothing music, an array of colourful flora, and an inviting pool, at the side of which a couple are enjoying penetrative sexual intercourse.

GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS

Not one to stand on ceremony, I promptly slide into the pool and watch the show, idly floating around as he pounds away with her legs wrapped round his neck. Alayna joins me, and we establish that she's from Canada. After a few minutes of small talk we're swept away by the moment and I soon find her legs wrapped around my neck as we re-enact the previous scene. It's a joyous union, although in retrospect I should perhaps have taken my hat off. Getting into the groove, we move over to a nearby waterfall and perform an act that is technically illegal.

Alayna is a willing participant though, and appears to be enjoying herself thoroughly, not least due to her interactive body parts, which can be pinched, bitten, flicked, licked and variously stimulated until she responds. In the event she has

several multiple 'responses', arcing her head back in ecstasy as she does so. We finish with 'dinner for two' on a rug, and all things considered, it has to go down as a successful first meeting. As I leave, another man tweaks her nipple. I pretend not to notice.

BIG WILLY STYLE

The next time we hook up, I am, as I explain, "looking for a new cock", perusing a shop's wall of frightful beasts that can perform all manner of realistic actions. However, they're all way out of my price range, and Alayna suggests that I have more pressing priorities, namely my appearance. She has a point, as I have thus far been prancing around the world of *Second Life* with a balding ginger pate and a pair of skintight shorts with butterfly motif.


The French pervert look hasn't deterred the flame-haired temptress thus far, but she gently suggests a change of image, generously offering: "You pay for the hair, and I'll take care of the duds." Joining her at a hairdresser's, I try a variety of styles, which are variously deemed "too dorkish", "too short", or the ultimate insult, "too Backstreet Boys". I finally settle on a shaggy surfer style and – with a minor

subsidy from my new sponsor – hand over my final 200 bucks. That's considerably more than I've ever spent on a haircut in real life but it meets with Alayna's approval, and I cheekily slap her arse in celebration. "We can play later," she tantalisingly promises.

NEVER TRUST A HIPPY

But later never comes. She starts talking to another bloke, and I wander round Pleasurable Sinners rummaging through boxes, finding a Harley Davidson jacket and a selection of trousers. I also find a box of BDSM equipment – whatever that is – and inadvertently handcuff myself to the wall.

Eventually freeing myself, Alayna gives me the once-over, declaring: "I like the leather. Can't say I like the flared look on you though, kinda hippy-ish." For want of something to do, I stick my finger up her [censored]. She then promptly declares that she has to go to work, casually announcing: "Ask around and you'll probably get a good lay around here."

"I'm faithful to you," I protest, but it falls on deaf ears. All dressed up with nowhere to go, I browse round a porno DVD shop. Alayna gives me 30 bucks before she leaves. It isn't enough. 

It's a tranquil, open-air oasis of calm with an inviting pool, at the side of which a couple are enjoying penetrative sexual intercourse

This year's Turner Prize proved controversial as usual.

Hill's new look can't fail to impress the ladies.

Hill's flat cap fetish is getting out of hand.



SUPERTEST

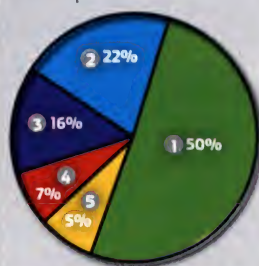
SOUND EFFECTS



Which game was music to the ZONE team's ears?

YOUR VIEW

Last month it was all about the free games...



- N 1st
- GRIDWARS 2 2nd
- GOLF? 3rd
- RROOTAGE 4th
- CAVE STORY 5th

jkh13: "W has ninjas. Nuff said really."

Reverend_Joseph (la-di-da): "Within A Deep Forest is much better than any game on your silly little list."

Escaped_monkey (our Steve): "I completely forgot about *Enemy Territory*. So yeah, *Enemy Territory*..."

Liquid_metal: "*Enemy Territory* was my gaming drug, but I've been clean for two years now. As for *GridWars*: 5/10. It's pretty, but nothing much happens except for the loss of your eyesight. Don't ever play it with a mouse either, or you'll end up ramming it into your monitor."

Petepointon: "I like *Clouds*, myself. It's like a wistful moment in a Miyazaki movie."

Reverend_Joseph: "*Clouds* was quite a pleasant experience, but the aim of the game went over my head."

WHKRAAAA0000," SAID **WILL**, attempting to get across the awesome metallic roar of the new Striders in *Episode One*. "Ngggrrrrroow," replied Suzy, conveying the realistic sounds of *GTR*, which reproduce that feeling of driving dead fast in a way that other racers haven't quite managed. "Plop," intoned Steve, faithfully replicating the sound of picking up a medkit in *Medal Of Honor*.

This month's sound effects Supertest involved more splats, grunts and groans than usual, although the groans were because Steve kept mentioning his recent trip to Skywalker Ranch. "I saw George Lucas!" he squealed, before sliding off his chair in glee and banging his palms on the floor. "He was eating food!"

Sound effects are easily the overlooked heroes of a game's soundtrack. The chaotic symphony of *GridWars 2*, which – once you're familiar with it – is as useful as footsteps in an FPS. The thuds and grunts of landing a thwack in *Condemned*

– or perhaps the involuntary gibber that accompanies a taser to the face. Then there's the disturbing organic squelches of *Prey*, and the immersive – but frankly depressing – atmospherics of the *Myst* series. And of course, on a much more basic level, you might be won over by the super-realistic toilet sounds of *The Ship* – an alarmingly realistic set of double-plops from a woman that conjures very vivid images of the developers blowing onto their arms and keeping a microphone in the office cubicles.

We came up with *Condemned* and *System Shock 2* as our favourite games – after some editorial weight-throwing, mind. As ever, you can listen to the full conversation on the DVD, and once you've done that – or if you don't even bother, and we couldn't honestly blame you – you should come to the ZONE forums at www.pczone.co.uk and tell everyone what you think. Be it squelch, plop, parp, toot or grnk – tell us the sounds that you love.



Be it squelch, parp, toot or grnk, tell us the sounds you love in our sound effects Supertest



Move over
Man Of Steel.



New Issue Out Now

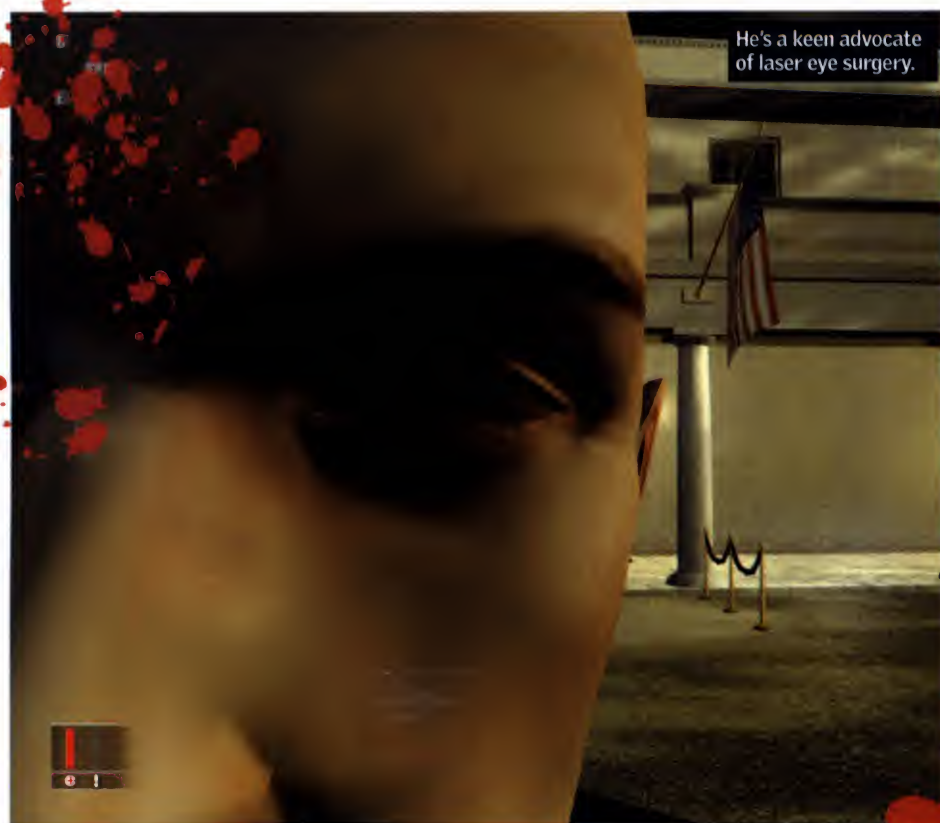
DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

Suzy Wallace shaves her head and prepares a poisoned sausage before her chat with Io Interactive...



HE MIGHT HAVE been last in the queue when god was dishing out hair, but *Hitman's* Agent 47 is one of the most ruthless assassins around – and after his fourth (and best) outing, we decided to find out more about him. After taking out a security guard and making our way into Io Interactive's offices, we cornered game designer Rasmus Højengaard (right), held a syringe to his neck and threatened to steal his clothes to get him to explain some of the finer points behind *Hitman: Blood Money*. He took it surprisingly well...



01 GENESIS: "Initially, we just wanted to create a character that had a little more grittiness and edge than most of the characters you see in computer games. Then came the thought-provoking idea of trying to fulfil the fantasy of being an assassin which was a really cool thing, but on top of that it's something that's hard to admit that you think is cool because it's basically about being evil. The inspiration was from a lot of things – Hong Kong movies, comic books and all kinds of stuff."

"We decided to make him a clone early on. I guess there was just something cool about him not having any roots, so by being a clone, he can be shaped into any form by the people who made him; they decide everything about his future fate, so making an assassin a clone would seem like the ultimate way to make the ultimate assassin. It evolved with the character before the first *Hitman* was even done."

02 GET THE PRESIDENT: "We included the White House because it hadn't been done before and it's a little unorthodox. It's something we have to be careful with because there are certain boundaries that you shouldn't cross, and also it's one of those locations that everybody has seen-but-not-seen, if you know what I mean. You've seen it 10,000 times in movies and stuff like that, but you still haven't really seen it because that's now a staging as well; it's just a set that resembles the real thing. We can build something and make people believe it and still morph it to fit into the game without anybody really noticing. So it's a really cool thing, because we can make it feel totally real, make the gameplay fun and provoke people a little with a location like that. What's more, most of the game was in the States, so doing the White House was a no-brainer."



I'm at a house that's not black.
Can you guess where I am?

03 THINKING OF DEATH: "When we have to think up accidental deaths, I guess we just squeeze our sick little brains and then the ideas just pop out. The people who work on these games are very visually creative people, so when you put a bunch of people like that together, you're just going to have ideas like this swirling around; it's inevitable. The only difference between us and other people is that we can actually use these ideas. If you put a bunch of 50-year-olds together and ask them to brainstorm on crazy stuff, they're going to come up with the same things but they just don't have any concrete use for it, so it just becomes these thoughts. We can actually put it into a product and sell it, so I guess that makes the situation different more than the ideas."

It's murder on the dancefloor.

04 AGENT SMITH: "It seems like we've been building up CIA Agent Smith (who you've just saved so many times that he owes you big time), so if at some point we need somebody to help you in the game, we have this character who hasn't played a big role but who has a lot of goodwill in him, so maybe you can use him later on. As far as I can remember, he wasn't really planned to be in the game at all because everybody hates him a little bit because he's just so lame, but he pops in there anyway. I think if we're going to use him again, we'll probably use him in a more serious way – if he's going to pop in, he'll need more gravity next time."

Agent Smith: a bit lame really.



AGENT SMITH

05 ALTERNATE ASSASSINS: "We wanted to have a really cool nemesis character for Agent 47 in this game, and Parchezzi has the goal of wanting to kill him because Agent 47 is basically what he's not. Parchezzi's a good assassin, but he has all these fatal flaws because he's an albino and is prone to cancer. We thought that making Agent 47 be hunted by him would be cool and we didn't really want to use clones in the game, so we came up with this guy. He turned out to be a really cool character; very classy, yet at the same time very mean."

"We wanted to have the other assassins to keep things interesting, plus we could have duels and other stuff going on. We could have characters that defended themselves more than the normal drug dealer or similar would do. So when we made the Mardi Gras level, the Heaven and Hell party and the Christmas party, we wanted to add the worry of having other assassins there so you got a bit paranoid – plus it makes for cool targets."



The way to an angel's heart is through her stomach.

06 A WORLD OF CONTRASTS: "Usually, *Hitman's* always been up the social scale in terms of location, with *Contracts* being the odd one out. For *Blood Money*, we wanted to do more picture-postcard locations because it just works more efficiently if you do some really cool stuff in a location that's the opposite. So if you take a peaceful suburb with sprinklers, barbecues and Martini-soaked housewives going about their business and you put a guy into a garbage truck and crush him to pieces, it's going to work a lot better than if you do it in a location such as a dark and abandoned warehouse which just screams horror. We wanted the game to be a little more hardcore too, and you can see this in the training level when you have to execute a guy who's actually begging for his life."

It's like the set of *Desperate Housewives*, but with an even higher bodycount.



He's a bit overdressed.

07 CROWDED HOUSE: "Initially, the Mardi Gras level was going to be a PlayStation 2 showcase. We wanted to see if we could do this on PS2 because at that point, everyone was hyping crowds on the next-gen consoles, so we knew that if we could get in and make a pretty decent crowd system on PS2 it would provoke a reaction. So we decided to put the crowds in, and it actually turned out a lot better than we'd hoped for. Realising it on PC and Xbox 360 is a bit of a no-brainer, but realising it on the lower-end platforms at almost the same quality was something that I'm really proud of – and I know that the same goes for a lot of the programmers who worked on this thing."

"A lot of people applied a sexual perspective to the dead lady, but it wasn't the idea of the ad – that's just what people came up with"

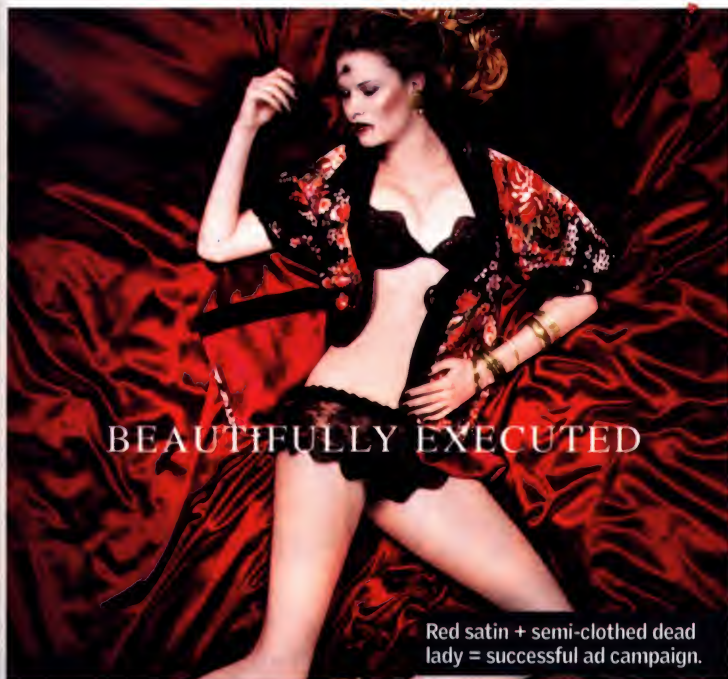
Rasmus Højengaard, designer, *Hitman: Blood Money*

08 OUR SECRET: "I think that the easter egg with the poker-playing rats was just a crazy idea between the programmer who was setting up the gameplay and an animator. They just took these poker-playing animations and these rats that we had and said: 'OK, do we have the memory for it? Yes we do.' So then they added the animations to the rats. It was just a funny thing, but there's tons more stuff too – people haven't found half of it."

"The easter eggs are sort of like a signature for some of the people who set it up, but it's just as much for the fans to discover too. It doesn't require much on our side except for the memory resources and it doesn't require much to implement, but the people who discover them get immense gratification when they do and can't wait to tell other people, and that in itself is one of the things that's going to help people dig the franchise and really get into the series."

RETRIEVE RU-AP M






Red satin + semi-clothed dead lady = successful ad campaign.

09 COURTING CONTROVERSY: "The controversy around the ad campaign was good – if you don't get some sort of reaction like that, you haven't made a good campaign. It's a fine line you've got to walk, but I don't think they were that horrific; when you compare them to what movies are doing nowadays, it's nothing. Most of the really horrific things came out of people's heads; for example, a lot of people applied a sexual perspective to the lady lying there dead, as in necrophilia and so on, but none of that was ever the idea of the adverts. It's totally people's minds that come up with these things and that's more worrying than the ads themselves."



Rats do the best poker faces.

Jesper Kydd, the man behind the music.

10 JUST KYDDING: "I think that *Blood Money's* got a successful soundtrack because the man behind it, Jesper Kydd, makes a really tasteful blend of electronic and symphonic music. It doesn't become too disturbed or too subtle and it changes dynamically with the AI in the game in a way which is pretty pleasing. You don't really notice the music until you remove it and that's how it's supposed to be; I think it stresses a lot of the situations and things that you do in the game, so together with the *Freedom Fighters* soundtrack, it's the best soundtrack to any game we've developed." 



CHARLIE BROOKER

Jon Blyth talks to the man who got away

Why Do We Care?

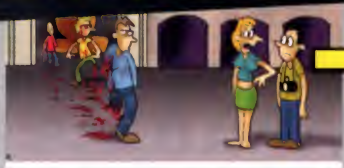
Because we all care about *PC ZONE*, don't we? And when people congregate in public areas to howl like a coven of barren spinsters, saying "*PC ZONE* isn't as good as it used to be", they'll usually follow it up with something like, "Bring Charlie Brooker back!" Brooker's a part of us, he's a part of you, not to mention a part of *Endemol*, the TV giant who – coincidentally – produced *The Law Of The Playground* TV show.

What's He Doing Now?

Charlie left for San Francisco just after the interview (well, two days after, but 'just after' makes it sound like he abseiled out of the window), where he's recording material for a second series of *Screen Wipe*, his continuing mission to make light of the unrelenting twattery of television. He co-wrote *Nathan Barley* with Chris Morris, he writes two columns for *The Guardian*, and underneath it all, he's a nice bloke. Underneath it all.



Remember These? BEST OF BROOKER



SICK NOTES: Charlie would engage in a monthly slanging match with a public who routinely proved itself to be entertainingly moronic.



'CRUELTY ZOO': People who have a copy of the lost issue of *PC ZONE* could probably sell it on eBay for over 17 million pounds.



EATING HIS OWN ARSE: Always a man of his word, when Charlie promised that he'd eat his own arse, he sat down for a wiry-haired treat.



A CALL TO ARMS: Who'd have thought a piece suggesting a Bush assassination would have offended idiot-loving American voters?

Q So you're busy with more *Screen Wipes* for BBC4... What about games? Have you been playing any recently?

A "Yes, but I've been working mainly from a laptop, so I haven't had the chance. I tried the *F.E.A.R.* demo on my desktop, but it came out like a flickbook – just a few still shots with a soundtrack. I tried playing *Hitman*, but I played it and just thought, 'oh, f*** off'. I hate stealth games basically, but I think I should like them, so I always end up buying them and hating them. Who likes stealth games, really?"

You're going to America... Are they going to let you in after your public plea for Bush's assassination in your *Guardian* Guide column?

"Well, they gave me a visa. It was so obviously a stupid joke, and it's not like I made a direct threat. Someone wrote a satirical article recently, saying, 'I'd like to hunt the president down and kill him with my bare hands', so I imagine he's in more trouble. That said, I'll probably get there, and after two hours find myself in an orange suit with a rubber ball in my mouth while they flush *The Bible* down the toilet at me."

The abuse got serious, didn't it? People called you ugly...

"Yeah. My favourite death threat was from a man who told me to

"I scanned the kids out of the Argos catalogue but nobody noticed"

constantly walk in a zig-zag fashion and walk under the cover of buildings and trees, because he had a sniper rifle that could take my head off from a kilometre away."

Brilliant. Talking of controversy, what was it like when you got the magazine pulled from the shelves with 'Cruelty Zoo'?

"Originally it was 'Lara Croft's Cruelty Zoo', as I was making some vague point about the number of animals she shoots. When I took it into the office, they had an issue with Eidos and the Lara Croft copyright. No problem with the images of children mutilating animals at all. Then I got news that HMV had taken us off the shelves, and others followed suit – then the whole magazine was recalled. Someone said, 'It didn't just step over the line – it stood on the other side of the line and pissed all over the line.'"

Good grief.

"Actually, I was more worried that someone would notice that I'd scanned the children out of the Argos catalogue, which I never told anyone at the time. And the monkey was from Encarta."

some comic-strip adverts, some of which appeared in *ZONE*. So I'd sit around the corner from where *ZONE* was, and it was McCarthy or McCandless who came up with the idea of me doing a strip for *ZONE*. Then I got into writing for them, and a few years down the line I got their magazine pulled from the shelves – and they probably regretted everything."

And how did you get the *Guardian* Guide writing gig?

"I started out with cartoons. It never really occurred to me to do writing – that was McCandless's idea. Years down the line, we did this April Fool's thing, where the point of the feature was to find out how patient helpdesk people could be. *Digital Update*, a little Radio 1 programme wanted to play them on their show. Then I got a job as presenter/reporter there, and that's when I started on TVGoHome. I did that secretly, at first. Initially through paranoia about getting sacked from the BBC, but after a while I started to enjoy the mystery. Eventually, it was through TVGoHome that I got the job at *The Guardian*."

There's a lot going on, but I noticed that the Church Of Charlie Brooker hasn't been updated in a while...

"No, I think the guy who used to run that site thought that *Nathan Barley* was so rubbish that he never updated the website again. That's something else I might be doing. But if we do another *Barley*, it'll be quite different. Some of the same characters, but it'd be a few years on, when he's a bit lost and f***ed-up – a mess. That'd be fun." **PCZ**



Nathan Barley, also known as 'c***'.

I also saw you'd worked for CEX, which confirmed my suspicion that that was your cartoon in their logo.

"Yeah, that was how I got the job at *ZONE*. I used to work in the Music & Video Exchange, but the guy who founded Computer Exchange – now CEX – paid me to do

Three things Brooker loves

R. KELLY
TRAPPED IN THE CLOSET

TRAPPED IN THE CLOSET: The basis for 'that' *South Park* episode that Tom Cruise got banned...



DANIELSON FAMILIE: Howling Christian musical mentalness.



NAMING THREE THINGS HE LOVES: In interview questions.



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On sale Thursday, September 14. Which is, coincidentally,
 James' birthday! Cards and gifts to the usual address.

Don't Miss Out
Just ask!



When you have finished with
 this magazine please recycle it.

NEXT MONTH

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

HALF-LIFE 2: EPISODE TWO TEAM FORTRESS 2 PORTAL

PLAYED!

PC ZONE jets off to Seattle for an exclusive hands-on
 with all of Valve Software's upcoming stellar titles
 – Gordon Freeman's latest unmissable episode,
 the online shooter sequel to *Team Fortress* and the
 'hole-y' amazing mindf*** that is *Portal*. You won't
 see this in any other magazine! Don't miss it!

PLUS!

MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR
 First play of the English
 faction in The Creative
 Assembly's new RTS epic



WORLD OF WARCRAFT
 Join The Burning Crusade!
 The latest on Blizzard's
 world-dominating MMORPG



WINDOWS VISTA
 Definitely next issue! What
 Microsoft's new operating
 system will mean for you!



ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS
 Earth needs you! Exclusive feature of Splash
 Damage and id Software's Strogg-orrific
 multiplayer blaster!

**ON THE DVD!**

GTR 2
BROKEN SWORD:
THE ANGEL OF DEATH
CALL OF JUAREZ

**ALSO!**

Steve Hill's *NeverQuest*, Phil Wand's
 essential hardware, independent hits in Indie
 Zone and more forgotten classics in Retro Zone!

ON SALE
THURSDAY
SEPT 14!

PC ZONE
Presents...

WARREN SPECTOR'S DOG'S PUZZLE PAGE!



Woof! Hi kids! I'm Warren Spector's faithful friend Maggie and this is my puzzle page! I've lost Warren in Area 51. Can you figure out which path leads to my master?

AREA 51

Woof! I've accepted Morgan Everett's proposal to join the Illuminati and rule the world through a compassionate conspiracy. Oh no!

Woof! Hooray! I've found him! And he has a nice juicy bone for me! Slurp!

Woof! I have chosen to merge with the Helios AI and rule the world as a benevolent machine! Whoops!

What do you call a man with ten rabbits under his hat?
A: Warren.

Woof! I've found myself in a situation in which I must spot the difference between these two pictures. Can you help me?

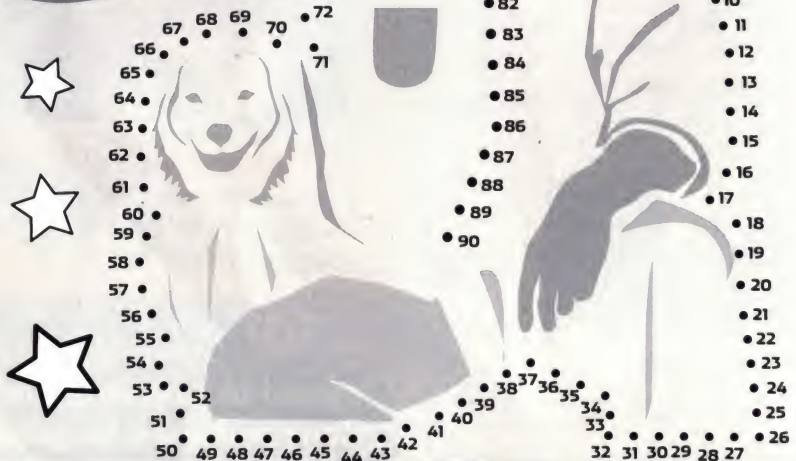
Woof! I'm really excited about this secret picture hidden below *pant pant*. Can you join the dots to find out what it is?



FUN FACT!

Woof! In Deus Ex, the face of the character Ford Schick was modelled after my master Warren Spector! That's barking mad!

NEXT MONTH!
Bedtime stories with Gabe Newell's cat!



ANSWERS: Path Puzzle: Woof! The correct path to take is path B! Spot the Difference: Woof! It's me and my master, Warren Spector! I like him.

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aren't for
reading...

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THE BATTLES



ARE ONLY



THE BEGINNING.



Actual in-game screenshots.

MEDIEVAL II

TOTAL WAR™

WINTER 2006

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